

Decus & Tutamen:

O R,
Practical Godlinefs
 THE
 ORNAMENT and MUNIMENT
 OF ALL
RELIGION.

Being the Subject of several
SERMONS
 Preached at
WESTMINSTER,
 UPON
TITUS ii. 10.

By *V. Alsop* Minister of the Gospel.

L O N D O N,
 Printed for *John Barnes* at the Crown in the
Pall-Mall, 1696.

1696

A462

Page

15.5

To all that Love the Lord
Jesus Christ in Sincerity,
especially to those who at-
tend upon his Ministry,
Grace and Peace.

Beloved Brethren,

WHAT was once preached to
your Ears, is now presented to
your Eyes, accompanied with fervent Prayers
that the God of all Grace would power-
fully impress it upon your Hearts. The
importunity of Friends is a common Apo-
logy for publishing some Pieces, which if
Affection had not more prevail'd than Judg-
ment, might as well never have seen the
Light. How much of this I might plead
to justify or excuse my appearing in Print
upon this Subject, many of you do know,

A 2

but

TO the READER.

but I shall willingly wave those Reasons: The Weight, the Worth, the Necessity of the Argument, as they have been my strongest Inducements, so are they all I shall offer for my Vindication.

The Age into which Sovereign Providence has cast our Lot, does much boast of Light, I wish that a proportionable measure of holy Heat had accompanied that Light; that Grace, Truth, and Peace might have been the Glory of our Times. But here we must bitterly lament that the holy Flame of Zeal for the Concerns of Jesus Christ; that fervent Love to all that bear his Image in Righteousness and true Holiness, has degenerated into, or been expelled by another Fire, not kindled from Heaven, but if we may judge of the Cause by the Effects from a contrary Original: The Spirit of Envy has almost eaten up holy Emulation; and we have disputed so furiously about Truth, that we have almost lost the other half of our Religion, Charity. The noise of Axes and Hammers in building the Temple has been as great, as once it was in destroying it;

TO the READER.

it; this Clamour has drowned the softer whispers of the Spirit of Holiness and Peace; our Speculations about what is too high for our Reach, and our Quarrels about what is too low for our serious Regard, have insensibly worn out Practical Godliness, and in the mean time Religion suffers, its Enemies triumph, its few Cordial Friends mourn over it, and suffer with it.

The Gospel of our blessed Saviour if it might have been heard, would easily have compromised all our Differences; but it has fared no better with Religion, than with that charitable Person, who interposing between two Friends engaged with drawn Swords, was in the heat of passionate folly wounded by them both for an unkind Reward of his Kindness.

It is much to be feared that this will be the undeserved fate of whoever shall undertake to reconcile contending Friends, to make them both his bitter Enemies; for in an Age of Fiery mistaken Zeal, he that is not Scalding Hot, shall be censured for Lukewarm, and not to be a Bi-

To the READER.

got, will be to be reputed not a Christian.

The only Expedient I can recommend to you, my beloved Brethren, in this sad Case is ; To maintain Innocence in your own Souls, Peace in your own Consciences, to keep close to your Duty ; and if for endeavours of Love, you must be so unhappy as to contract Enmity, to retire with the Psalmist to your God, Psal. cix. 4. and give your selves unto Prayer.

But as the Holy Gospel of God our Saviour suffers unworthily by our Divisions, and Contentions ; it suffers no less by our unsuitable Conversations : which yet is but the evil Effect of an evil Cause, the bitter Fruit of that poisonous Root. For as when one part of the Natural Body grows great beyond its Proportion, it robs the rest of their due Nourishment, and Growth ; such is our deplorable Case ; we have furnish'd the Head so plentifully with Notions, that we have starved the Members of their proper Supplies, that they cannot perform their proper Operations. We have laid out so
much

To the READER.

much of our Zeal, and Vigor, upon Controversies, that there's little left to support the necessary things of Practical Religion, Holiness towards God, Repentance from dead Works, and the exercise of good Works, and a heavenly Conversation.

I Bless God, from my Soul, that most of you are of another Temper, and Character; though I cannot deny, that the Enemy has studied to sow Tares among you; and while we slept, his Emissaries and Instruments, have watch'd, to bring in among you some Doctrines and Practices which would have Wounded, if not mortally Stabbed, our Holy Profession. But blessed be the Great Superintendent of his Church, who faithfully watched over you, and against them, and has prevented, and defeated their subtle Malice.

It's for the sake of humble sincere Ones principally, that I have drawn up, and sent forth these Papers; who cannot perhaps wield a heavy Argument for the Cause of Christ, and against its Opposers; and yet their Integrity and Uprightness keeps them

TO the READER.

secure ; and the Grace of God on which they humbly and securely depend , enables them to Live down all the Objections of Atheists, Deists, and Profane Persons, by a regular and exemplary Conversation.

We Read of a Philosopher, who when a subtle Sophister disputed zealously, that there was no such thing as Motion in the World ; said nothing, but rose up and walked. You may possibly meet with such Profane Wretches, who with great Noise and Clamour, would bear you down that there's nothing real, nothing solid in Religion ; that its an empty ineffectual Notion, a curious airy Speculation, that has no power upon Mens Hearts, no command over their Lives ; now if you shall meet with this importunate Clamour, which is the best Argument they have ; say you nothing, but rise up and Walk. Let Men see your Holy, Heavenly Conversation, and this will silence all their Cavils, and stop the Mouths of all their Objections, better than you can do by fine force and Dint of Argument.

And

TO the READER.

And indeed, let us Dispute, Write, what, and while we please, nothing will vindicate Religion from the Reproaches thrown upon it by impudent Atheism, but the Holy Walking of those that profess it. And it's a thousand pities that false Doctrine should be credited by a severe, morose and rigid behaviour, while Truth it self is blemish'd, and brought into Contempt by a loose one.

Let me therefore Anticipate the following Discourse thus far, as to assure you, that the Credit of our Holy Religion can never be recovered without

1. A more Consciencious Sanctification of the Lord's Day: all practical Religion Rises, Falls, Ebs, Flows with that. When a Generation of Men removed the Observation of that Day from Divine Institution, and laid it upon the Churches Tradition, or the Civil Sanction, the repute of it sunk presently, and the observation of it dwindled away to nothing.

2. A more constant fixed Worshipping God in our Families. As Personal Remissness will creep into the Family, so will
Family

TO the READER.

Family-Looseness easily infect the Churches. It is in vain to Dream that Congregations will be Holy, if Families be Profane.

This one thing further, Brethren, I have to beg of you, or rather of God for you, that you may most zealously, and unweariedly pursue the things that make for Truth, Holiness, and Peace, and never to divide those things which God has joyned together, and God, even our God, shall give you his Blessing. This is the unfeigned Desire, and shall ever be the fervent Prayer of him, who is, and shall endeavour to approve himself to God, to his own Conscience, and to yours,

The faithful Servant

Feb. 25.
1698.

of your Souls through Christ,

Vin. Alsop.

The

1733
1696
— 37

The Reader is desired to Correct these few
Errors, which notwithstanding all our
Care have escaped the Press.

PAge 19. Line 27. for *not* read *yet*, p. 112.
line 16. for *heart* read *hurt*.



TITUS ii. 10.

*That they may Adorn the Doctrine of God
our Saviour in all things.*

— ἵνα τὴν διδασκαλίᾳ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Θεοῦ
χρησµώσιν ἐν παντί.

THE Exhortation here given us, is of far greater extent than the Occasion on which it was given: The Occasion was narrow, but the Equitable Construction is wide: It was given immediately to *Servants*, but it reaches their *Masters*: None so low as to be beneath it; none so high as to be above it: The poorest Servant in his humble Capacity, must demean himself with that Fidelity and Integrity, that he may *Adorn the Doctrine of the Gospel*. The highest Prince in his exalted Orb, must remember that he has a Lord and Master in Heaven. In a word, whatever Figure any one makes, whatever Character he wears, in whatever Relation he stands, whatever Place he fills, yet he comes within the compass of this Command, to walk soberly, righteously,
B religiously;

religiously, that he may *Adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

The Christian Religion is a Piece of exact Symmetry, a Face of excellent Beauty, *'Tis all glorious within, and its cloathing is of wrought Gold*; Pſal. xlv. 13. But we muſt take up a moſt bitter Lamentation over it; its Harmony has been diſordered, its Beauty blemiſhed, much filth thrown in its Face, not only by the Reproach of declared Enemies, but the unſuitable Converſations of thoſe that profeſs it, who value themſelves highly upon it; who pretend to have an Inter-eſt in it, and their higheſt hopes and expectations from it. In ſhort, it has been *wounded in the houſe of its friends.* Zac. xiii 6.

What Plato once ſaid of *Virtue*, may be more juſtly affirmed of the Goſpel, if it could be ſeen in its native and genuine Beauty, *Omnes in ſui admirationem abriperet*; it would allure all Eyes, raviſh all Hearts, draw all Mens Affections, and raiſe it ſelf a Throne in every Man's Conſcience. But here we muſt acknowledge with grief and ſhame, that either we have got ſuch feeble Conceptions of it in our own Souls, or ſo miſerably miſ-repreſented it to others, that we have rendred it cheap and unlovely, and moſt wretchedly ſcandalized it before the Sons of Men.

If therefore there be any who have already heard, or ſhall hereafter read, this mean, but well-

well-meaning Discourse, whose pious Souls are grieved that this Holy Doctrine has been trampled in the mire by unhallowed Feet, or whose Consciences have been toucht, that they themselves have been the Cause of, or given occasion to this Scandal, unto such is *the word of this Exhortation sent*. That they would conscientiously endeavour to retrieve the Credit, to vindicate the Honour, and in the Language of the Text, *to adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*. In which words you will easily observe *Three Parts*.

1. *The Great End* which God has propounded to us, and which we are to propound to our selves; that in the whole Course of our Conversation, we *adorn the Doctrine of the Gospel*.

2. *The Extent* of this Exhortation; *In all things, ἐν παντι*, which may refer to *all the Parts* of this holy Doctrine; to adorn it in all the Precepts, all the Promises, all the holy Examples laid down therein; or else it may refer to *all the various Relations*, wherein we stand, the various Conditions wherein the Providence of God may cast us, that in all these we make it our Business to *adorn this Doctrine* to beautify this blessed Gospel.

3. *The Reason* assign'd to inforce this Exhortation; it is *the Doctrine of God our Saviour, τὸ σωτήριον ἡμῶν Θεοῦ*, of our Saviour, who

is God : It's the Doctrīne of our God who has Authority over us ; the Doctrīne of our Saviour, who ſhould have the great commanding Intereſt in us ; and our greateſt Concerns are wrapt up in it. It's the Doctrīne of a Saviour, and it's a ſaving Doctrīne, and all the Reproach thrown upon this Doctrīne, falls upon Chriſt, what falls upon Chriſt falls upon God ; and whatever Reproach flies ſo high as God, will certainly fall down again with an overwhelming Vengeance upon the Head of him that throws it.

There's little that will need Explication, to clear our way to the Doctrīne, only two words may deſerve ſome Conſideration.

1. *Doctrīne*, διδασκαλία . I will not be ſo critical to diſtinguiſh it from διδαχή, ſeeing *Suidas* makes them Synonymous, διδαχή ἀντὶ τοῦ διδασκαλία . Theſe two words then are of adequate ſignifications, and both of them denote, 1. *Matter of Faith*, what we are to believe. Or, 2. *Matter of Practice*, wherein we are to obey. Thus where the Apoſtle, *Tit.* 1. 9. amongſt the other Characters of a Biſhop, requires this ; *That he be able by ſound Doctrīne to exhort.* *Oecumenius* thus glosſes it, διδασκαλία ὑγιαίνουσα* that is faith he, ἡ καὶ δογματικὰ ἀληθὴς, & βίον ὀρθόν διδάσκει, *ſound Doctrīne is that which teacheth Orthodoxy, and a regular Converſation.* 'Tis that which makes a *ſound Head*, in oppoſition to Heresy ; and a *ſound Heart*

Heart in opposition to Hypocrisy, and both these will produce a *sound Conversation*.

2. A second Word which I will touch upon, is *κοσμεῖν*, that they may *Adorn*. The *adorning* commanded, is not by painting Religion, or adding any Artificial Colour to the Face of it; 'tis not by superinducing any varnish above its natural Complexion; for Religion needs none of our over-officious Skill to deck, and trim it up after the newest Mode, or to recommend it to the wanton Affections of Men with a meretricious dress, for *Gold needs no Gilding*; but the way of Adorning here enjoynd, is by rubbing off the Rust, wiping off the Dust, washing off the Dirt, which by the injury of Time it has contracted, or by the reproach of Enemies it has suffered; that we restore it to its primitive Lustre, its original Simplicity, by walking up to the Commands, answering the Demands, living up to its Ends, and expressing the true Native, real Glory of it, in a suitable Conversation.

From the words thus opened and cleared, I recommend to you this Doctrine. *It ought to be the conscientious Care of all that do profess the Gospel of Christ, to adorn the Doctrine of that Gospel which they profess in all things.*

The Apostle lays so great a Weight upon this Duty, as if it were the *one thing, the only thing necessary*, Phil. i. 27. *only let your Conversation be as it becometh*

becometh the Gospel of Christ. And there are two subservient Duties, which will much contribute to this great Design. 1. The former is Stability, stedfastness in the Faith, *that ye stand fast in the Spirit.* 2. The other a Holy Zeal, *that ye strive together for the Faith of the Gospel.* Stand fast without wavering, be zealous without cooling; and let your Interest and the Name and Glory of your Redeemer, be much upon your Hearts in both these.

Whatever can be said upon this Subject, is compendiously summ'd up in that other place of the same Apostle, which I will give you a brief Paraphrase upon, and then proceed.

Phil. iv. 8, 9. *Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me: do, and the God of peace shall be with you.* This is the abstract of what I can speak, or you hear upon this Subject: *Think on these things, and do them.* Digest the matter well in your Thoughts; concoct it thoroughly in your Hearts, and then reduce all to Practice. 'Tis not Speculation but Action, that must recover the Repute of Religion, and the particulars where-
in

in you must be active and zealous are such as these: 1. *Whatsoever things are true*, ἀληθῆ. Let the Power of Truth in the Heart, evidence it self in the Life; and the Grace of God in the inward Parts, shine through the Body in all suitable demeanor: It is *Theodoret's* Gloss upon 1 *Tim. iii. 2.* The Apostle (says he) would have a Bishop to be σώφρονα, ἡσυχίον, τῷ φθέγματι, ἔνδοξον, ἐν βλεμματι, ἐν βαδισματι ὥστε ἐν τῷ σώματι φαίνεσθαι τὴν αἰσθησιν σωφροσύνης. That his whole carriage be such, so comely in his discourses, in his habit, in his looks and gestures; that the Complexion of his Soul may shine through the Case of his Body. 2. *Whatsoever things are honest*, σεμνά. That we be grave yet not morose, serious yet not austere, reserved without affectation; that as the End of our Conversation is a matter of the greatest Importance, and the Rule of our Lives of equal Concern, so the Mien and Air of our behaviour may bear some good Conformity to them both. 3. *Whatsoever things are just*, δίκαια. As we must be Holy towards God, so must we also be just towards all Men; for Righteousness is *Evangelium visibile*: 'Tis the preaching of a Gospel which Men understand; our Religion teaches us to give to God and Man what is their due; and all the World will conclude that if we defraud them, we would if it were in our Power, cheat our God too; nor can we ever confute

those Suspensions which Men will easily enter, tain of our Hypocrisy, but by an exact and punctual discharge of all those Offices of Justice which we owe to them. 4. *Whatsoever things are pure, ἀγνά.* Chast, modest, pure, clean; that our Discourses favour not of Filthiness, our Behaviour do not smell rank of inward Turpitude, that we admit not the Flesh to mingle it self with our Courses or Discourses, but that in all things our Speech be seasoned with Salt; *Administring grace unto the hearers.* Ephes. iv. 29. 'Tis a dirty World we walk in; he that will walk clean must pick and chuse his way with great Care and Conscience. 5. *Whatsoever things are lovely, ωρεοφιλή.* Let a Spirit of Candour and holy Ingenuity breath in all our Actions, that we affright not Men from Religion by a sour disobliging way of Converse: There is a mean, could we hit it, between a base, creeping, fawning prostitution of our selves to the Lusts of Men, and a haughty, surly Arrogancy which will not stoop or bend to the benefit of Men; and this mean is that *generosum honestum*, that greatness of humility which would persuade the prejudiced World to entertain more tolerable Thoughts of God's holy Ways, and perhaps in time to try and practise them. 6. *Whatsoever things are of good report, εὐφημα.* To decline those Practices which carry an Appearance of evil with really good Men.

Now

Now (says the Apostle) *If there be any virtue.* If ever your Religion had any commanding Interest in you, or has had any sanctifying power upon you, *And if there be any praise.* If you expect the acceptance and approbation of God, or the moderate commendation of good Men; *Then think upon, and do these things,* and for your encouragement, *The God of Peace shall be with you.*

In the managing of this Doctrine, I will propose this Method.

1. To shew what the Adorning of the Doctrine of the Gospel does presuppose.

2. What it is to Adorn the Doctrine of the Gospel in all things.

3. What are the particulars of the Doctrine which we must Adorn, and how it may be Adorned in each of these Particulars.

4. I will lay down the Arguments which ought to prevail with us herein.

5. And lastly, I will endeavour to improve the whole Discourse, and reduce it to Practice.

S. 1. Let us inquire what the Exhortation to Adorn the Doctrine of the Gospel does presuppose.

There was something more than ordinary in the matter that the Apostle so earnestly, and frequently presseth this one Point. Some Injury had been offered from which it needed

to be vindicated ; something amiss in their Conversation that needed Reformation : and we have cause to fear that the Case is our own. Some notable Affront has been put upon the Gospel, some indignity offered to the Profession of Religion, which will render our present Discourse too pertinent. That which is presupposed may be reduced to these Heads.

1. That the Doctrine of the Gospel of Christ considered in it self, is a most beauteous and lovely Doctrine.
2. That this Doctrine has been miserably blackened, and blemished, by those that should have given it a better treatment.
3. That whoever professeth this Doctrine, is obliged to wash off that dirt and filth which has been cast upon it.

(1.) That we are so earnestly urged to Adorn the Doctrine of our God and Saviour, presupposeth that as it came first out of the Hands of Christ, it was altogether lovely; representing the sweetness, and expressing the holiness of him that gave it forth : And

I. One eminent Beauty of the Doctrine is this : That those Truths which soar the highest in Speculation, yet in their design and tendency, aim at a holy practical Conversation : Those which in the Theory reach the highest Heavens, yet in their Scope stoop down to the Earth. It was said of *Socrates*,

Primus

Primus Philosophiam è Nubibus in Terras deduxit : He was the first that brought down Philosophy from the Clouds, and made it an useful thing to Humane Life. It was greater which was said of our own Mr. Perkins, *Primus Theologiam è cælis in Terras deduxit*. He was the first, who amongst us, reduced Doctrine to Application, Speculation to Practice. However that be ; most certain it is, that every Truth, Doctrine, Proposition in the Gospel, aims at the subduing of Sin in the Heart, and of the Heart to God ; to make us better rather than wiser. The design of the Scripture is not to Amuse and Puzzle us, but to Reform and Sanctifie us : not to Confound our Heads, but to Conform our Hearts, and Reform our Lives to the holiness of its Principles : not to make us lose our Wits, but to save our Souls. But the truth of this will most clearly appear in some few instances.

I. The Doctrine of God's Electing some out of the Mass of mankind, from all eternity, unto eternal Life, is a Doctrine which swallows up our Reasons, and we are lost in the depth of it : here indeed Faith will swim, but naked Reason, unassisted by Revelation, will certainly sink and drown in that vast Abyss : for who is he that standing upon the Shoar of that unfathomable Gulph, will not cry out with Apostle, *Rom. xi. 33. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God !*

God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! And yet when this sublime Doctrine shall produce its effects in the calling home of Souls to God, it comes cloathed with visible Grace, and approves it self to our experience, and terminates in practical godliness: *Eph. i. 4. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the World; that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love.* As the Sun whose glory we cannot safely behold, nor gaze upon, in his meridian Lustre without endangering our Eyes, yet we can comfortably view by Reflection: So that Doctrine which would strike us blind, in its direct and immediate Prospect, Administers a sweet and sensible Consolation, when it comes to take hold upon the Heart in effectual Calling.

Those curious Speculations which Men have spun out of their own Brains, and woven into subtle Webs, as the Spider her Nets out of her own Bowels, are but Elaborate Nothings; refin'd trifles, we may know them, and be never the better; be ignorant of them, and never the worse. Only Gospel-Doctrines have this singular excellency, that they bear hard upon the Corruption of the Heart to Mortifie it, upon Pride to abase it, and press vigorously upon the Conscience to purifie, and pacifie it. They are therefore styled in *1 Tim. vi. 3. Wholesome words; even the*

the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Doctrine which is according to godliness: ὡμαίνοντες ἑαυτοῖς. *Wholesome in themselves, and healing to the Soul; such as being taken down into the Heart, purge out the Corruption of depraved Nature, and in a word, it's a Doctrine whose every line is drawn by the straight Rule of Holiness; and centers in that one point of Godliness.*

2. The Doctrine of Redemption is another great instance of this Truth: what more amazing than that God should send and give his Son, and that the Son should give, and offer up himself to Redeem lost, self-lost Sinners; to Redeem them by Price paid to God out of the hand of Justice; to Redeem them by Power out of the hand of the Devil. This would lead us back to the Covenant of Redemption, between the eternal Father, and the eternal Son, when *the Counsel of Peace was between them both*, Zech. vi. 13. But here we may lose our selves, and perhaps not find out God, till we relieve our selves by such Scriptures as that, *Tit. ii. 14. He gave himself for us to Redeem us from all iniquity, and purifie unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. Not only Redeeming us from Hell, but Sin: nor only to purchase, but to purifie us to himself: nor only to deliver us from the future, but from this present evil World: Gal. i. 4. Not only to rescue us out of the Devils*

Devils power, but out of our own, and thus this Doctrine terminates in Godliness, in Good Works, for so the Apostle concludes his Discourse, that he might purifie unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

II. Another Peculiar Glory of the Doctrine of the Gospel is, that it never more directly designs the advancement of a Sinner, than when it abases him most, and lays him lowest: it suits indeed the Sinners Misery, but always crosses his Lust: Empties the Creature when it designs to fill it, and humbles the proud Worm that it may exalt it: the Gospel Breaks first, and then binds up; Wounds that it may Heal, and Condemns that it may Justifie: It will make the Sinner plead Guilty before he be absolved. It strips him Naked before it cloaths him; and makes him know and see, and feel himself the most beggarly Wretch in the World, before it discovers the unsearchable riches of Christ. In a word, it will convince us all that we are the most miserable, undone, lost things, 'ere it Saves us.

And in this Point the Apostle has fully satisfied us, 1 Cor. i. 29. 31. That the Method of the infinitely wise God issues in this: *That no flesh might glory in his presence, but he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord.*

In Election, God had no respect to Faith, Works or the right use of Free-will foreseen, — that no flesh might glory in his presence:

sence : the same Method he takes in justifying a Sinner, — *That no flesh might glory in his presence: so Rom. iii. 27. Where is boasting then? It is excluded! By what Law? Of Works? Nay but by the law of Faith.*

There are two things upon which the haughty Creature would value it self, *Its own Righteousness, its own Strength*, and we may add a third, its own Wisdom: upon these especially the proud Worm lifts up its Crest on high; the gracious God has provided all these in his Covenant; that the Sinner shall have Righteousness, shall have Strength, shall have Wisdom, but none of his own but Gods:

First, For *Righteousness*, This is one of the strong Holds wherein the proud Flesh fortifies it self, and goes about to establish his own righteousness, Rom. x. 3. And this strong Hold God will dismantle, and level it with the ground, before he builds the House upon the impregnable Rock of *his own righteousness*, i. e. *that of Christ*. Conviction of Sin, and comparing our selves with the Holy Perfect Law of God will thoroughly effect this, and then the Sinner stands upon other terms with God, and his own Conscience: you shall hear this stately proud Creature speaking in another Language, when he comes to be distressed about his sin, *Mich. vi. 6. Where-withal shall I come before the Lord, and bow my self*

self before the most high God? What perplexity is here between *the necessity* of coming, and the *hazard* of coming? I must come before the Lord either to be justified, or judged: I must come before him, both at the Foot-stool, and at the Throne: but *wherewithal* to come, or what to bring that I may be accepted in his sight I find not: my own *unrighteousness* I see now to be *abominable*, and my own *righteousness* I am convinced is not *justifiable*; wherewithal then shall I come? In this distress, the Gospel discovers Christ and his righteousness, and when the Sinner accepts, receives, lays hold and rests upon it; It has encouragement to say, *Isa. xlv. 22. In the Lord have I righteousness: In the Lord shall all the seed of Jacob be justified, and shall glory.* Here then shines out the glory of the Gospel-Doctrine: it never designs a more perfect Cure than when it makes the Sinner sick at Heart: Thus the Spirits Method is, first to convince of Sin, and then of Righteousness, *Joh. xvi. 8. Of sin* that the Sinner may be abased, and made willing to accept a Pardon upon Christ's Terms; and *of righteousness*, that the wounded Soul may not die of its Wounds: for thus was the brazen Serpent lifted up, that they who were mortally stung by the fiery ones, might look, and live, *John iii. 14, 15.*

Secondly:

Secondly, Another Strong Hold which Man would build up, and God will demolish, is *Man's own strength*. 'Tis unaccountable that Man should thus Idolize his own often baffled, often foiled strength, which was never yet able to make him stand against his own Corruptions, the Worlds Allurements, or the Assaults, and Wiles of the Tempter: It is the Grace of God alone that must take us off our own, and place us upon a stronger bottom; and teach us how to be *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*. Eph. vi. 10. And now whereas the late difficulty was, Wherewithal shall I appear before the Lord? Another difficulty appears; And I find that I can no more appear against the Devil in my own Strength, than I could appear before the Lord in my own Righteousness: he is subtle and strong; I am foolish and weak, yet the Gospel has relieved me: *Isa. xlv. 24. Surely shall one say in the Lord, have I strength.*

3. A third Peculiar Glory of the Doctrine of the Gospel is, that as it lays the Creature low, it exalts and lifts up God on high. When the Sinner lies prostrate at Gods Foot, it sees the Lord most gloriously exalted upon his Throne, *Isa. vi. 1.*

There's no Doctrine that so vilifies Man, none that so much glorifies God: in all other Systemes which Philosophers had fram'd to themselves, they provided well to ad-

vance the Creature, they furnished him out with his *ἑκούσιον*, with a *Free-will*, and put him into the hand of his own wisdom to carve himself out a happiness: they made a God of their own *Moral Virtues*, and those Virtues were at their own disposal, so that upon the matter they were Creators of their Gods: *Nullum Numen abest si sit prudentia: That thou art happy owe to thy self*, was one of their highly celebrated Maxims. But the Doctrine of the Gospel gives a clear other Scheme of things: that Man is nothing, knows nothing, can do nothing, *cannot think a good thought*, nor pursue it to any good Resolution, nor manage the good, nor bear the evil by his own Wisdom or Strength. This Doctrine teaches us to think meanly of our selves, highly of God: to look upon our selves as Worms, as Moths, *as nothing, and less than nothing*, and worse than nothing: but how honourably does it teach us to think, to speak of God; how reverently to Worship him, how holily to walk before him; with what confidence to trust him, with what fervor of Soul to love him, and in short to make him the first and last of all.

4. The fourth and last Peculiar Glory of the Doctrine of the Gospel which I shall name at present is, that it never exalts one of the Divine Attributes to the derogation of another.

Here

Here is Mercy exalted, but withal Justice satisfied, and while the Free Grace of God is upon the Throne, Holiness is enthroned with it : God can no more *Pardon* without security to his *Justice*, than he can punish with inconsistency to his Mercy.

The minds of Men are strangely deluded in this matter, for looking only upon Mercy, they forget the severity of his Justice ; and if an imaginary Mercy would but answer the ends of their Presumptions, they take no further thought what becomes of the essential Holiness of God : But infinite Wisdom has secured, and sweetly adjusted the Interests of these two great Attributes, *Rom.iii.26.* *That he may be just, and the justifier of him, that believeth in Jesus :* God will justify, there's Mercy, but he will be just in justifying, there's provision made for his *Justice*. The Justice of God satisfied on Christ. The Mercy of God magnified on the believing Sinner. Thus God will not lose his Glory, and the believing Sinner shall not lose his Soul.

There seems to be a difficulty in *Exod.* xxxiv. 6, 7. *A God pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin, and not a God that will by no means clear the guilty.* A perplexing Riddle, If God will by no means clear the Guilty ; how does he pardon transgression ? But his Justice is as peremptory as his Mercy is

free : he will no more pardon Transgression without due compensation to his Justice, than he will condemn the Sinner that by Faith lays hold on that Compensation, which his Wisdom has provided , and his Grace offered in the Gospel : Here then, *Mercy and Truth are met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.* And all the Attributes of God do sweetly embrace, and harmoniously agree when the Satisfaction of one makes way for the exerting, and exercising of the other, *Psal. lxxxv. 10.*

(2.) That we are so earnestly pressed to Adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour, presupposes, that however beautiful this Doctrine is in it self, it has been miserably blackened, defaced, defiled, and much dirt thrown in the Face of it : which is done various ways.

1. *First* when from the Doctrine of Divine Grace, Mercy, Forbearance and Forgiveness, Corrupt Heads and Rotten Hearts draw Conclusions of Licentiousness ; that is, when they interpret Grace into Presumption, which is evidently to subvert the End, and Design, to invert the Order and whole Method of the Gospel Doctrine : for though the Gospel proclaims Pardon of all Sin to the Repenting, it Indulges none to the impenitent Sinner. He that by sinning presumes to find Work for Mercy, shall find to his

his cost that he was making Work for Vengeance. The Corruption of depraved Nature has discovered it self in many instances; these especially evidence its malignity.

1. When Men will be evil because God has been good: The design of his *goodness, patience, and long-suffering*, is to lead them to *repentance*. Rom. ii. 4. But if this goodness be despised; and because God is *long-suffering*, they will be the longer in sinning; and because Mercy is still striving with them, they will out-strive that Mercy: they will be convinced, that they are *treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*.

2. When Man will be, and do evil, that God may be good in pardoning; such there are who say, *Rom. iii. 8. Let us do evil that good may come*: Let us Sin that Grace may abound! Against this presumption the Apostle thunders out a just *Damnation*: and because that they might pretend that this was only the Consequence of that Doctrine of Free Grace which he Preach'd; he abhors it as a *scandalous report*, and that his Doctrine abetted no such abominable Inferences: he owns indeed, *Rom. v. 20. That where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*, but he denies the Consequence, chap. vi. 1. That therefore any should continue in sin that grace might abound.

The Apostle *Jude* ver. '4. notes those ungodly ones, who turned the grace of God into lasciviousness. 'Ασεβείς, πλὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν χάριν μεταπίπτουσιν εἰς ἀσέλγειν' where it will deserve observation. 1. What it was they thus wretchedly abused: It was the grace of God: not the work of Grace upon their Hearts, for that they were Strangers to; they were ἀσεβείς, such as had thrown off all worship of God; but it was the Doctrine of Grace, which is indeed sometime called Grace, because it is a revelation of free rich Grace offered to the Sons of Men. 2. Into what did they turn this Grace? into *Lasciviousness*, or an unbridled Licence to commit all manner of iniquity with greediness. 3. But how could they do this Abominable thing! They did it by a *Metathesis*: most wickedly transposing, inverting, and perverting the Order, Method, and design of God and his Gospel in every thing; and what should have been the strongest Argument to withdraw them from sin, they made their great encouragement to sin; and thus they turned the point of God's argument upon himself.

2. Secondly, When Men take up a Profession and form of Religion, but deny the power of it upon their Hearts, and in their Lives: this is one of the Characters of those perillous, those last, and worst of days.
2 Tim. iii. 5. Having a form of godliness, but denying

denying the power thereof: for the great end of the Gospel is to Convert Sinners unto God, to subdue them to the Authority of Christ; but these Wretches represent it as a weak and inefficacious Doctrine that has no power nor prevalency upon their Souls, they deny the power of it. There's nothing more certain; than that if Mens Religion does not drive out their Lusts, their Lusts will drive away their Religion: and yet these will be *lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, and despisers of them that are good*, and yet which is wonderful, they will maintain a *form of godliness*.

If you ask them, *Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth?* They will tell you they firmly believe it: Ask them again; *Do you believe in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord: that he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, that he suffered under Pontius Pilate, was Crucified, dead and buried, that he descended into Hell?* And all the other Articles of the Creed; All these they stedfastly believe! But when this Doctrine commands subjection of Soul to all these Truths; *That we should live to him that died for us, and rose again.* 2 Cor. v. 15. In this point they desire to be excused;

which is an evident affront to the Gospel; whose design is to turn them to God from Idols, to serve the living and true God, 1 Theff. i. 9. This is it, which evidences that the Gospel comes not in word only, but in power, and in the holy ghost, ver. 5. And so the same Apostle, Rom. vi. 17. gives thanks to God, that they who had once been the servants of sin, had obeyed from their heart that form of Doctrine which was delivered unto them: or rather, that unto which they had been delivered. εἰς ὃν ᾤψεδόκητε.

Men may be sound, and Orthodox in their Heads, and yet Heterodox, and rotten in their Hearts: They can afford to lend Christ an Ear, and give him a civil hearing, still reserving their Lusts to themselves, and their Hearts for the World; and when the Word demands entrance into, and to have a Throne in their Hearts, they deny it the commanding power, and bid it sit below at the Footstool, sending away the blessed Gospel disappointed, and ashamed.

3. Thirdly, The Gospel has been exceedingly stained, when it's entertained for no other end than to subserve some base low design of the Flesh, and made a slave to some worldly interest. This Reproach the Pharisees cast upon their own Religion. Mat. xxiii. 14. who under the Covert, and Colour, of long Prayers, devoured widows houses. Περπαροί. A pretence

pretence indeed they had, but it was so thin and transparent, that an ordinary Eye might see through it, and discover the wicked Design at the bottom. Such were they, *1 Tim. vi. 5.* who *supposed Gain to be Godliness.* But most notable was the Instance of *Simon the Sorcerer, Act. viii. 13.* This famous Hypocrite was *baptized, nay, believed and adhered to Philip,* and was free of his Money too; but all was that he might make his Markets of Religion, that he might purchase the Gift of Miracles for himself and his Disciples, and so maintain his former Repute that he was some *Great Thing*, the very *Power of God* amongst the deluded People. But all this Project was defeated and blown away with one breath of *St. Peter's Mouth, thy Money perish with thee.*

We have a Generation of Men in our Age, denominated from this *Simon*, who have driven a mighty gainful Trade by the Gospel; who buy or sell the Superintendency of Souls; whose Money, and we may justly fear, their Souls too, and those of their Flocks perish together. These are a horrid Scandal to Religion, not seeking Christ, but themselves; not feeding the Flock, but their own Pride and Ambition; who when *the Great Shepherd shall appear*, must be compelled to stand before his presence, but will not dare to lift up their Faces with a holy and humble Confidence,

dence, and shall receive a just Recompence of Reward.

4. A fourth thing that has blemish'd the Doctrine of the Gospel, is those swarms of damnable Doctrines which have been poured out upon the World ; of these the Apostle, 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2. has prophesied. *That there shall be false teachers who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them ; and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. That they shall bring upon themselves swift destruction*, is very sad, but the least part of the evil, they have justly deserved it ; but that the way of Truth should be evil spoken of, which has not deserved it, is most deplorable.

(3.) The Third and Last thing supposed in the Apostles exhortation is, that every one of us in our respective places and stations, do engage as far as in us lies, to restore Religion to its Primitive Lustre and Splendor, and so to retrieve the Reputation of it ; *to adorn it in all things*. In order to which blessed End, I will only at present offer a few things :

1. Would we recover the original Beauty of the Doctrine of the Gospel ; we must so walk, so act, live as those that believe Invisible things to be the greatest Realities.

Without

Without breach of that Charity which we owe to all Men, or pretending to search the heart; we do see, and may say, that many walk, as if all their hopes were terminated by their Eyes, and that they believe no other World, no other Reward, than what is within the reach of Sense.

But this was the Glory of the Apostle Paul, 2 Cor. iv. 18. that he look'd not at the things that were seen, but at the things not seen. His main scope and hope was in invisibles; an invisible God, an invisible World had that influence upon his Soul, that he was born up under all present pressures; could glory in all his present tribulations, upon the hope of a future Recompence. This was it which made Moses endure, as seeing him that was invisible. Heb. xi. 27. And if we search into the Reason of this otherwise unaccountable resolution, we have it, v. 1. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. If Faith can render the future World present; if it can represent the unseen World to the Eye; if it can bring down Heaven and lay it with all its Glory before us, it will teach us to live at another rate, than we can possibly do upon the proposal of all things to our Sense. This will teach us to wait, and to possess our Souls in patience whilst we wait so. For those things which Christ has promised to them that love, and from love obey him.

Rom.

Rom. viii. 25. *If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.* This was it which taught the Primitive Christians to rejoyce, 1 Pet. i. 8. *Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom tho' now ye see him not, yet believing ye rejoyce with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*

2. Convince the World that you can trust your God upon his naked word; who will believe your Religion, has any thing solid and substantial in it, if you cannot depend on the promise of him whom you say you have chosen, and taken for your God. We see it evidently, they that have chosen the World for their Portion, can trust its Promises and take its Word for good Payment; what a reproach then will it be to those who have a better God, but a worse Faith than they that have a worse God?

Let all Men therefore see that you dare follow your God on the Credit of his Truth; that you can trust him, for the Re-imbursement of whatever you shall lay out for his Name, or lose for his sake. Compel Men to acknowledge that you dare avow your Consciences against all the Damage you can possibly sustain for it, or from it; convince an unbelieving Generation that there are those who know their God so well, that they can trust him, and tho' you apprehend you may probably lose something for him, yet
you

you shall lose nothing by him, you have it under his Hand, he will Repay it.

Glorious was the Faith of *Abraham*, Heb. ii. 9. *Who sojourn'd in the land of Promise, as in a strange Country, because he could confidently and comfortably look for a City that had foundations, whose builder and maker was God.* v. 10. Such was the Faith of *Moses*. v. 25. *Who chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompence of reward.* In which Heroical Actings of Faith, we cannot but observe; First, The Value, the different Value that he put upon things. Secondly, The Choice he made in pursuance of that Valuation. First, Let us consider his estimate of things; he esteemed the Reproach of Christ greater Treasures than the Riches of *Egypt*; where the two things put into the opposite Scales, are the *Reproach of Christ* in the one, and the *Treasures of Egypt* in the other. And what Man looking on these with an Eye of Sense, would not esteem the Treasures of *Egypt* preferable to Reproach and Scorn? But there was something that turned the Scale in his Judgment, something that gave him a Holy Byass, that he judges the worst thing in Religion, better than the best in *Egypt*. The best thing that *Egypt* could boast of, or court him

him with, was its Treasures: the worst thing Religion could affright him with, was Reproach, especially if it goes so high as an ignominious Death: And yet he *esteems the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt*; because he kept his Eye fast fix'd upon the *Recompence of Reward*. Secondly, Let us not wonder if this was the value and estimate he made of things, that his Choice was proportionable; *he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season*. Two things are set before him, and upon his good or evil Choice depended Life or Death, *Affliction and Pleasure*. And is this a Measuring Cast? Or can any one be long in suspense which to chuse? Affliction is evil, Pleasure is good: True, but those Afflictions were to be born with the Church of God, in which he might be assured of God's gracious Presence, his powerful Protection, his seasonable Grace to help in time of need. And for the *Pleasures*, they were polluting and perishing Pleasures, which would leave a sting in the Conscience, to imbitter the remembrance of them, and therefore his Judgment sway'd and determin'd his Choice that way.

This, and nothing without this will convince Men that you take the Promises for True, that these shall be responsible to your Faith; that God shall be responsible for his Promises;

Promises, and that his Truth, his Faithfulness and Omnipotency shall be responsible for God.

3. Thirdly, Let this one thing more be made appear, *that you are under a Law to God.* That the preceptive part of the Word has taken as strong hold upon your Hearts, as your Faith has taken on the promissory Part. This will satisfy all the World, that you are in good earnest with Religion, when you live in the practice of the most Flesh-displeasing Duties; that you can deny the most profitable temptation to sin, and that you walk as those that firmly believe your Religion will bear its own Charges. The power of the Word restraining us from the most gainful sin, and constraining us to the most chargeable Duty, will be a most pregnant Proof, that *God is with us*, and Religion *in us of a Truth.*

But let thus much suffice to the first general Inquiry, *viz.* what this Exhortation *to adorn the Doctrine of our God and Saviour doth presuppose.*

§. 2. Proceed we now to the *second general Inquiry:* What doth it imply to *adorn the Doctrine of the Gospel in All things?* To this the answer must be returned in many Particulars.

(1.) That

(1.) That the Doctrine of the Gospel must be Adorned *in Civil as well as Sacred Affairs*. It's not enough that we demean our selves decently and reverently in Acts of immediate Worship, we must walk in the same fear of God, under the same holy awe, in our secular Businesses: Religion must command even our Recreations, our Diversions, our Converses, our particular Callings. As carnal earthly Hearts will carnalize their Religious Performances, so will spiritual Minds spiritualize their common Employments. It's far short of the *Whole Duty of Man*. That we Sanctify the Lord's Day, we must Sanctify our own. God has indeed graciously indulged us six Days in the Week to labour in, but not one of those Days, nor one moment in any of those hours, wherein we may do the Work of the Devil and the Flesh.

If ever we will pretend to Credit our Religion, we must evidence Holiness in the Shop, as well as in the Church; in our own Houses, as well as the Lord's; we must be Holy in Trading, as well as Praying; we must Sanctify the Name of God at our own Tables, as well as the Lord's Table. 1 Cor. x. 31. *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* And again; 1 Pet. i. 15. *As he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.* Ἐν παντι ἀγασθεσθῆν. In all the windings and turnings;

turnings of your lives. There's nothing lawful, though never so remote from Heaven, but may be laid in a right line and due subordination to it; and when we cannot actually intend our ultimate end, yet must we virtually refer all unto it; this is that which has reproach'd Religion. that what warmth we get in the Worship of God, we presently lose it, and grow luke-warm, perhaps stone-cold when we depart from it: And thus whatever we build up at the Church in one day, we are plucking down all the week after.

(2.) We must *adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.* In *second Table Duties* as well as those of the *first*: The same God who sees and observes the temper of our Hearts in Dealing with himself, observes it also in our Treatings and Dealings with Men; would we approve our sincerity before an all-seeing God, approve it also in our Treatings, Conversings and Transactings with Men.

There are some excellent *first Table Christians*, who will not swear lightly; not take God's Holy Name into their Mouths profanely; that seem to make a Conscience of the Lord's Day; that are severe in regulating the Worship of God by his Word: And yet if common Fame may be credited, are under no such severe Bonds of Conscience in their Covenants, Contracts and Engagements with

D

their

their Brethren; but the Doctrine of the Gospel would have taught them another Lesson, *Tit. ii. 12.* which teaches us to carry it *Righteously* towards our Neighbour, *Soberly* towards our selves, and *Godly* towards our God. What a rare Pattern was *David*, *Psal. ci. 2.* *I will behave my self wisely in a perfect way; I will walk in the midst of my house with a perfect heart.* He will be a Holy King upon the Throne, a Holy Judge upon the Bench, a Holy General in the Field, Holy in the City, and Holy in the Country; for a perfect Heart had taught him to *walk wisely in a perfect way.*

If therefore we design to vindicate the Glory of Religion, none must *go beyond, overreach, or defraud his brother*; *1 Thess. iv. 6.* our Covenants must be kept, tho' we suffer by it, *Psal. xv. 4.* Truth must be spoken to, and kept with our Neighbour, and that Neighbour must be every one that partakes with us of Humane Nature.

(3.) *In all things.* In holy Works as well as holy Words: It's not well-saying, but well-doing, that must wipe off the Reproach that has been thrown upon our holy Profession, *1 Pet. ii. 15.* *So is the will of God that by well-doing, ye put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.* Foolish Men will be lavish of their Tongues, they will be reproaching Religion, and the Religious; this evil-speaking is the effect

effect of their ignorance ; but the question is, how shall we silence them, and stop their Mouths for the future ? This he resolves, as the Direction of God himself. 'Tis *by well doing* : Words are cheap, Works are chargeable, and will cost us more to perform them.

It's a mortal stab that is given to Religion, when the Professors of it, talk as high as Heaven, and yet walk as low as this dirty Earth. When our Ntions and Professions seem too high for this World, and yet too low for the next. Words without Works, are a Language which Men do not understand ; we speak to them in an unknown Tongue : but to be Beneficent, Charitable, to do them good ; to relieve the Distressed, to deliver the Oppressed, to make peace among Contending Neighbours. This is a Dialect which is Vernacular to all the World.

Had we judged of a *Pharisee* by the Ear, and not by the Eye, he had been the most excellent Saint on Earth ; but our Saviour notes them for this : *Matth. xxiii. 3. They say, and do not* : Nay our blessed Saviour rebukes his own Disciples upon this Account. *Luke vi. 46. Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say ?*

Let that therefore be ours, which was the Motto of a great Man in his time, *Non magna loquimur sed vivimus*, Let Men see,

as well as hear us; that our *light may so shine before men, that they seeing our good works may glorifie our father which is in heaven.* Matth. v. 16.

(4.) *In all things.* In *Passive* as well as *Active Obedience*. In suffering according to the will of God, as well as acting in obedience to it: It's a very poor Religion that is not worth suffering for. We must expect otherwise no better Language than this; surely if these Professors did really believe their God to be Faithful and True, they would trust him. Did they believe *the Recompence of Reward*, they would venture their All upon it. Did they believe their God able to repay them, to reimburse them, in what they should lay out, and lose for his sake, they would generously forsake all at the Call, and for the Cause of their God.

Sufferings have ever been the Test, the Ordeal by which Christ has Proved his Disciples: *Mark x. 17, 18. A young man comes running to Christ*, as if in great haste for Heaven: and that he might justify his Obedience, which he hoped would justify him; he avouches it to Christ, that he had kept all the commandments from his youth, he began early, continued long, promised to persevere to the end: I confess I suspect he either lyed against his Conscience, or else had a very bad one; and he had been more hopeful, if from a
found

found Conviction he had bitterly cried out, *All these commandments I have broken from my youth*: But be it so; Christ willing to try the truth of his *Active* by his *Passive Obedience*, put him upon this Trial: *Go, and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven*: This was a pinching Word indeed! The Neck-Verse for a Hypocrite! Methinks I see his Courage cool, his Countenance change, and grow pale; Amazement and Confusion in his Looks; he turns about, and goes away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Upon no lower Terms than these must we hope to Recover the Glory departed from our Profession: Then when we can cast all at Christ's Feet, resign all into his Hands, and whether he gives or takes, say with holy Job. Job i. 21. *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.*

Let us therefore set before our Faith, and imitate the Father of the faithful: Gen. xxii. who when called of God to offer up his Son, his only Son, his well-beloved Son, the Son of the Promise; and that in a way, which seemed to Contravene the Law of Nature, the positive Law of God, yet disputed not, delayed not, but gave this clear Demonstration that he had nothing too Dear for his God.

(5.) *In all things. Whether in a more narrow and private; or in a more enlarged, and publick capacity.* The Heavenly Orbs are of different Diameters; yet they move regularly according to the Laws imposed upon them by their Creator. The Stars are of differing Lustre and Glory: and yet they shine, and grudge not their influences to this lower ungrateful World, which returns them nothing but Fogs and Mists to obscure their Light and Beauty. God has placed us All in Spheres of different Circumferences: how small soever they be, let our Motion be Regular and Orderly: he has filled us with various degrees Grace and Gifts; let us lay out all faithfully. There are various Talents with which our Sovereign Lord has intrusted us; for kind, for number, 1 Cor. xii. 11. *Wrought by that one, and the same spirit, dividing to every one severally as he will.*

If then our Talents be few, let's be faithful in the using, diligent in the improving them: *the unprofitable servant*, Matth. xxv. was not condemned because he had but *one Talent*, but because *he hid it in a Napkin*. He that has but a little spot of Ground, may Cultivate it, and shew that diligence in improving it, that it may reward his Labour with a blessing.

Since

Since I considered that passage in the History of *Abalom*, 2 Sam. xv. 4. *O that I were made judg in the Land, that every one that has any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice.* It has taught me never to be ambitious of great things, without more Grace to manage them: but we are frank and liberal in our Promises to God, to Men, and to our selves. The poor Man says, *O had I Riches, how rich would I be in good Works?* The Illiterate says, *O that I were Learned, what service would I do.* But let us Pray that we may have Grace to be useful, and serviceable with what we have: that whether in a narrow, or more dilated Capacity, we may *Adorn the doctrine of our God and Saviour in all things.*

(6.) *In all things, In affirmative as well as negative Duties.* 'Tis not enough that we Curse not God, we must Bless him. The Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11. had a Religion made up most of *Negatives*, with a small sprinkling of lesser Duties, and not without a mixture of Superstition. *God, I thank thee, I am not as other men are; extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican.*

When the final Sentence shall pass upon every wicked Man, it will proceed thus, *Matth. xxv. 42. I was hungry and ye gave me no meat: I was naked and ye cloathed me not: I was sick and in prison, and ye visited me not.*

The Indictment will not be laid that they plucked the Bread out of the Disciples Mouths; but that they did not feed them: Nor did the Charge run, that they stripp'd the Cloaths off the Saints Backs; but that they did not Cloath them. They are not Accused that they Cast them into Prison; but that they relieved them not, visited them not, when there: we have all cause to Pray with the holy Person, *Lord pardon my sins of Omission*. Negatives will never intitle us to that blessing of *living many days, and seeing much good*. We must join the Affirmative with them, *Psal. xxxiv. 14. Depart from evil, and do good.*

(7.) *In all things*: In all Companies whether *holy or unholy*. The Apostle discharges the *Corinthians*, *1 Cor. v. 9, 10.* from the *Company of Fornicators*: And yet he seems to correct, or limit the Prohibition, yet *not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with Idolaters*; for in that Latitude the Command would not be practicable: for then, says he, *ye must needs go out of the world*. Either a Christian must retire wholly from all Business in the World, or must quite remove his Station into the other World. A godly Man then, may possibly be cast amongst them, though a prudent Man will not of Choice frequent them: The holy Art, and Skill, is how he may

may Adorn the Gospel when he is inevitably thrown amongst them. And it's a good Rule; that if we cannot make wicked Men ashamed of their wickedness, yet should we neither be ashamed of, nor a shame to Holiness: if they will not go to Heaven with us, let us not in complaisance go to Hell with them. Though Prudence will advise us to *be wise as serpents*: a good Conscience will oblige us to keep our selves *innocent as Doves*: That our unseasonable Rashness may not expose us to the fury of Men; nor our temporizing Compliance, to the wrath of God. David had studied this Case with great accuracy. *Psal. xxxix. 1, 2, 3. I will keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence; I held my peace, even from good: and my sorrow was stirred: My heart waxed hot within me; while I was musing the fire kindled, then spake I with my tongue.*

Here was a notable conflict in David's soul; betwixt his *Prudence* and his *Zeal*, while the wicked were before him. Prudence advised Silence; Zeal counselled Speech: while the Case was desperate, and no hope of doing good appeared, *Prudence* prevailed, he was *silent*: but as soon as there appeared fair probability of doing more good than harm; or rather some good, and no harm; then Zeal unlock'd his Lips, and he *spake with his tongue*. A modest word in season, even amongst

mongst the Profane, has proved a seed of God lodged in the mind, which Divine Grace in due time has awakend to Conversion.

Let us therefore earnestly beg of God this mixture of holy Zeal, and holy Prudence: That when Providence shall cast our Lot into evil Company, though we must have some Commerce with wicked Mens Persons, we may have no Communion with them in their wickedness. I conclude this Head with that blessed Advice of 1 Pet. ii. 12. *Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you, as evil doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorifie God in the day of vifitation.* 1 Pet. iii. 13. *Having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you, as evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsly accuse your good conversation in Christ.*

(8.) *In all things.* In all those Relations wherein the goodness and wisdom of God has placed us. It has pleased the Sovereign disposer of all things, in his own World, which he powerfully made, and wisely Administers, to set his Rational Creatures in several Relations, some he has appointed to govern, others to obey; but whatever Post the Divine Pleasure has allotted us to keep, our business must be to Adorn the Doctrine of our God and Saviour in All things.
Rom.

Rom. xii. 6, 7, 8. *Having therefore gifts differing according to the grace that is given us. — whether ministry, let us wait on our one ministering; or he that teacheth on teaching; or he that exhorteth on exhortation; or he that ruleth with diligence; that so we may fill up that Relation with a holy Zeal to glorifie our God and Saviour.*

I. There is the Master, and his Servant: the Master perhaps may think he's above the Control of his poor Servant: but he must know that he has also a *master in heaven*, Col. iv. 1. Let him then remember that with this God *there is no respect of persons*. Let them make a Conscience to give unto their servants that which is just and equal; *τὸ δίκαιον, & τὴν ἰσότητα*. It's just, that they receive the Reward of their Labour, which by Compact or Desert they may claim. It's Equal, that as Masters exact of their Servants time for their Service, that they allow them competent time for the service of God: nor let Servants think that their Relation to God, does exempt them from Fidelity to their Masters on Earth. 1 Tim. vi. 1. *Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God, and his doctrine be not blasphemed.* To plead, or pretend Christian Liberty as a Manumission from Christian Subjection and Duty, is an open blaspheming of the Doctrine

ctrine of God. But because the Case of Servants seems hard, the Divine Goodness has made the Promise adequate to the Precept. Col. iii. 23, 24. *Whatever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord : knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance.* This Exhortation is inculcated in our Text and Context. Ver. 9. *Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things : not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity : and all upon this great Consideration, which has its influence upon all other Relations, and their respective Duties, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

2. Upon the same Reason, and account, it is that Wives are strictly commanded, 2 Tit. iv. 5. *To be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands ;* and all this enforced with the same great Motive, *That the word of God be not blasphemed.* All inferior Relations carry some inconveniences with them : they have the labouring Oar ; which renders their Case somewhat difficult, and furnishes corrupt Hearts with matter of discontent ; but still this one thing may abundantly satisfy them, that in whatsoever Station the wife God has fixt them, they are yet capable of *adorning the doctrine of our God and Saviour.*

3. This

3. This consideration is also pressed upon the Consciences of Subjects, 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. *Submit your selves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the King as supreme, or unto Governours, as unto them that are sent by him: for so is the will of God, that by well doing ye put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.* Abundance of reproach has been thrown in the Face of Religion on this score, which we can never wash off without Tears; 'tis well it was not washt off with our Blood, nor shall we be able to do it, till Obedience for Conscience sake shall convince the World, that though *the Ordinance be of Man*; yet *the Authority is of God*, by which they Reign, and for which we obey, Ver. 10. *As free, and yet not using our liberty as a cloak of maliciousness; but as the servants of God.*

(9.) Lastly, *In all things*; In all those various Conditions to which we are obnoxious in this Life: Plenty or Want, Sicknes, Health; good or evil Report, Liberty, Restraint; in all these, or whatever other diversities of Providence the wise God shall try and exercise us with, the Gospel of Christ must be Regarded and Advanced.

As Poverty gives no dispensation to Murmur, Repine, or Steal: so Riches gives no indulgence to Oppression, Luxury, or Riot. The Doctrine of the Gospel reacheth the highest, bindeth the lowest. Hath God fa-
voured

voured thee with Prosperity? Bless his Name, but humour not thy self in Vanity. Hath God humbled thee? *Humble thy self under his mighty and righteous hand, that he may exalt thee in his due time.* 1 Pet. v. 6.

A Garment may be made decent and comely, as well for a Funeral as a Wedding: *In Prosperity* God invites us to *Rejoice*, Eccles. vii. 14. But yet to wear our Garments of praise with humility: *In the day of Adversity*, we are called to *Consider*; that God has set the one over against the other. Of this excellent Spirit was the Apostle, *Phil. iv. 12.* *I know both how to be abased and how to abound: every where, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound, and to suffer need.* This one instance fairly Copied out upon our Hearts, and expressed in our walking, would convince the World of the excellency of the Doctrine of the Gospel, and the Grace of God, that can teach the Soul to maintain an equipoise of Mind in all Estates: To have a humble Heart in an elevated, and a high Faith in a low condition.

Afflictive Sorrows, and exalting Comforts, divide our whole Lives between them, yet both of them are capable of glorifying God. *Jam. v. 13.* *If any man be afflicted let him pray.* Prayer under Affliction, witnesses that we believe our God to be good and gracious in it: that he can support us under it, can do us
much

much good by it, and deliver us from it : But if any be chearful, *Let him sing psalms.* As then God has divided our Lives between Afflictions and Consolations, let us divide them between Prayer and Praise. I conclude this with that of 1 Cor. vii 30. *Brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that they that weep be as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not; for the fashion of this world passeth away.* When Grace shall teach us a Holy indifferency of spirit towards these outward things : to mourn under evil Circumstances with that moderation as believing that God can turn our Sorrow to Good, nay into Joy : and to rejoice under smiling Dispensations, as they that believe our elations, and transports may soon be dashed ; and to keep that equability of Spirit as they that know *the fashion of this world passeth away*; then shall we *Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

S. 3. Proceed we now to the third General Enquiry, *viz. What are the Particulars of the Doctrine of this Gospel which we must Adorn; and how may we Adorn it in those Particulars?*

The Doctrine of the Gospel may be reduced to two Heads, *Precepts and Promises*: and both these may be comprehended under the

the General Term of the *Divine Testimonies*: because they *Testifie*, what God expects from us; and what we may expect from God: The *Preceptive part* informs us, what God justly expects from us in a way of *Duty*: The *Promissory part*, what we may expect humbly yet assuredly from God; either for *present Assistance*; or *future Reward*: Both of which, if narrowly considered, will inform us, what it is that will Adorn the Doctrine of the Gospel.

(1.) I begin with the Precepts, These are the true Copy of the Divine Nature: The great instances of the Divine Authority: The visible Demonstrations of the Holiness of the Law-giver: The express Image of the Purity of him that gave them forth, and the great Proofs of our Integrity. A marvellous Beauty and Glory is impressed upon them by God, but they have been insolently trampled upon by unhallow'd Feet, cruelly treated by unclean Hands; and now how to recover them to their Original Glory, is the difficulty and design of this Discourse.

If we ask the Psalmist what value and estimate he put upon them? What Glory, what Beauty he could behold in them? He readily answers, *Psal. cxix. 128. I esteem all thy Precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way. All thy Precepts concerning All things.* There is a lustre in every
single

single Precept; but a Glory in them All. As every Star shines with its proper Light; but as they stand Combined in their Asterisms, and Constellations, so they shine with a marvellous Glory. And as every Creature which God produced by his creative Word, was *Good*; yet when he came to take a prospect of them in their Relations to each other, he pronounced them *exceeding good*. Gen. i. 31. Such are the Precepts of God; and they are so *concerning All things*. They reach the Heart, with all its Principles and Ends; they govern our Words; they regulate our Lives; they restrain from Sin; they constrain to Obedience; they instruct us how to walk holily before God, honestly and righteously towards Men, soberly towards our selves; and to *hate every false way*.

If you again ask him why, or upon what Reasons he prizes them at this high rate; he will satisfy you, Ver. 72. *The law of thy mouth is better unto me, than thousands of gold and silver*. I know there may be good use made of *Gold and Silver*. A good Conscience will not purchase Meat in the Market: nor Innocence buy us Cloathing in the Shops: but the law of thy Mouth is *better*, upon higher, upon nobler Accounts. It acquaints me with those ways, wherein God is to be found; where I may expect Communion with him: it directs me how to walk well-pleasing to

my God, whom to please is my highest Ambition : it shews me how I may be *kept from the paths of the Destroyer*. Gold and Silver will not heal a wounded Conscience ; nor pluck the Thorn out of the Flesh ; nor instruct the doubting Soul how to clear up its Peace with God. What use others may make of their Gold and Silver I know not ; but *unto me, the words of thy mouth are better* : By them *is thy servant warned*, to avoid the Sin, and to escape the Snare : by them is thy Servant Reproved, when his own folly has exposed him to the bait and snare : and by them is thy Servant Recovered out of those Temptations, into which my own rashness or carelessness have thrown me.

The Goodness of all things is reckon'd from their Suitableness to the present and pressing exigency : If we are hungry, a piece of Bread is better than thousands of Gold and Silver : which we may have, and yet Starve. If naked, a few Rags are better in that present straight than thousands of Gold and Silver, which will not cover our nakedness. If then the Mind be uneasy ; Conscience dissatisfied ; if Sorrow sits as a thick Cloud upon the Brow. The word of God, which speaks to the Case, is better than thousands of Gold and Silver.

There

There are three things which render the Precepts of Christ easie, and our Obedience pleasant.

1. When we keep our hearts fixed upon the Author of them: 'Tis the Doctrine of God our Saviour: as God he claims Authority over us, as a Saviour he challenges an Interest in us. Right to Command, and Interest to Obey, are a Cord of Love too strong to be broken: Christ assures us, *Matth. xi. 29, 30.* That his *Yoke is easie, and his burden light.* 'Tis a Yoke: none of Christ's Servants are Sons of *Belial*; but 'tis an easie Yoke. His strength which he gives, that Principle of Love which is the governing Principle of the Renewed Nature, makes it so. Hence Christ presses Obedience upon that Principle, *John xiv. 15.* *If ye love me keep my Commandments.* Can you pretend a mighty love to my Person, and yet despise my Authority? Give this essential Proof of your Love, that ye keep my Commandments. If your Friend should sooth you up, and with many fair and fawning Complements protest he values you, and yet at the same time Spit in your Face, or throw Dung upon you, you would desire him to give better evidence of his Love than those Actions, which speak Despight and Scorn. The Commands of Christ are the Mounds, and Fences which he has set about his Glory. If you will pluck

down those Walls and Defences which your Neighbour has set about his Inclosures, and then pretend that you do all this out of pure Love and Respect to him; I am persuaded he would desire you to forbear such Proofs of your Love, and give more convincing Tokens of it. Christ is willing you would rather spare your high Expressions, and give Evidence of your Love by sincere Obedience.

2. When the Conscience is bound in subjection to Christ, when the Soul can lie at his Foot, *and take the Law from his Mouth*, then will his Precepts be exceeding precious. A Command that lies only on the Back, is heavy, ungrateful, and the uneasie Soul waits but a fair opportunity to shake it off, and the Flesh will never let it want such an opportunity; but when it has got hold upon, and firm footing in the Heart, it meets with a Principle there suited to it. The new Heart makes new Obedience pleasant. *Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. A new heart also will I give you, and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

3. A clear Experience of present strength to Obey, with a firm belief of a future Reward, will render Obedience pleasant. There is not only present Strength felt, and a future Reward expected. but a prelibation of that

that future Reward too, which contributes to this delight, *Psal. xix. 11. In keeping of them there is great reward.* But when the holy Soul can live, walk, act, in the hope of that *eternal Salvation*, whereof Christ is the Author to all that obey him, *Heb. v. 9.* When the Eye of Faith has got *Moses* his Perspective-Glass, to behold him that is *Invisible*, and clearly see the *Recompence of Reward*; this alleviates the Burdens, counterballances the Inconveniencies, overcomes the Difficulties, which attend a close walking with God. A future Reward produces a present Comfort: the reward of Eternity influences the present time; for Faith and Hope though they deal with what is absent, distant, future, yet Administer present Joy, present Strength, because the Connexion between upright universal Obedience, and the glory of that other World, is close, strong, and inviolable.

Such are then the Precepts of the Gospel; so excellent, so glorious in themselves, and to all who in a Consciencious course of holy Walking have proved and approved them; and yet so shamefully have they been sullied, violated, and trodden under foot, that the Question Recoils upon us at every turn: How shall we vindicate them? What must we do to restore them to their own inherent Glory? In answer to which I will lay

down these few, and plain, but necessary Directions.

1. *Direction.* Let the Universality of your Obedience convince the World that you make a Conscience of Obeying; you will never satisfy others, nor your selves, nor the searcher of Hearts, to Obey in any, unless you Obey in All. He that will pick out one Duty, where, and when, it may consist with the Interest of the Flesh, and wave others because they will not comport with that Interest, will never stop the Mouths of Men, nor silence the Clamours of his own Conscience, when it shall accuse him, *of partiality in God's Law*, Mal. ii. 9.

The Lawgiver has stamp't the same Impressions of his Authority, the same Characters of Holiness, upon them all: and he that can allow himself professedly, and deliberately to break one, is prepared to break them all, when the Temptation shall press hard upon his Corrupt Heart, *Jam. ii. 11. He that said do not commit Adultery, said also do not kill.* This was the ground of the *Psalmist's* lifting up his Face with Confidence, *Psal. cxix. 6. Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy Commandments.*

The Scribes and Pharisees were a sad instance of this Hypocrisy. They would strain at a Gnat, and yet could swallow a Camel.

mel. They would be thought severe in *Tything Mint, Anise, and Cumin*, and yet could neglect *Mercy, and Judgment*, those great, and weighty matters of the Law, *Matth. xxiii. 23.* If we look upon them in *Ceremonials*; the most straight-laced, and tender Conscienced men in the whole World: but when you view them in their *Morals*, the most loose, and dissolute; nothing would choak them there, *John xviii. 28.* They would not go into the judgment hall lest they should be defiled, but that they might keep the *Pas-fover*. And yet they were not so nice, and squeamish, but they could shed *Innocent Blood*, and imbrue their Hands in that of the *Messiah*. They would not touch a dead Body for a World, yet scrupled not to murder a Man. They would not eat with unwashed hands; but had no regard to cleanse their Consciences. The Apostle expostulates with the *Judaizers, Rom. ii. 20.* *Thou that abhorrest Idols, dost thou commit Sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the Law, through breaking of the Law, dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.*

In a Word, Nothing will buoy up the Repute of a drowning Religion, till the Professors of it shall make it appear, That they not only Obey the Precepts of the Gospel, but that they carry a radicated

Principle in their Hearts, that will not suffer them to disobey: which Principle, though it falls short of what God in strictness may expect, yet must it come up to what he in Mercy will accept. And this was the ground of the Apostles Confidence. *Heb. xiii. 18. Pray for us! For we trust we have a good Conscience, in all things, willing to live honestly.*

2. *Direct.* Make it appear that you can, and dare obey against all temptations, oppositions, and discouragements. An unsound Man will walk smoothly on in smooth Ways; but rugged Paths, and a stiff Gale in his Face make him return. Thus many will walk a Mile or two with Christ, but when Persecution arises because of the Word, they have always a reserve in their Bosoms, and an evil Heart is an easie Casuist to dispense with Obedience upon slender Penance.

That Man who is under a Law in his own Conscience, subject to the Authority of God, that owns no Dispensation from Obedience, nor Indulgence to sin, is the Man that will Adorn the Precepts.

They that can shift their Sails as the Wind veres, and use all the Points of the Compass to make their Point, and whether the Gale blows from Hell or Heaven can serve themselves of it, will never Credit his Religion.

The Providences of God are many, and various ; the Precepts are uniform, they vary not : the wise God makes use of the former to Prove us in the latter : Thus he *led Israel through the wilderness*, Deut. viii. 3. *To prove them, to know whether they would keep his Commandments or no.* They had *bread to the full*, to prove them whether they would Obey in Plenty. Again, they are reduced to Straits, to try whether they would follow him in want. The Proofs will lie here, whether we can be content with *Winter*, as well as *Summer Work*: whether we will follow God in foul Weather as well as fair.

3. *Direction.* Let us be much in the Exercise of those Graces, the Practice of those Duties, which Men understand : sincere Intentions, good Meanings, uprightness of Heart, the acting of your Faith upon God come not within their Cognizance; till you can shew, and demonstrate *your Faith by your Works*. Let your Faith justify your Persons before God; but till your Works shall justify your Faith before Men, you will never be able to justify your Religion and your Sincerity therein. Never tell Men of your Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, unless you shew Repentance from dead Works they will not believe : and this was *St. Paul's Practice of Piety*, Acts xxiv. 16. *Herein do I exercise my self always to keep a conscience void of offence towards God,*

God, and towards men. But because this is that Convincing Point which must, if ever, recover the Credit of Religion, let me be allowed to prescribe some more general Rules for the right and comely ordering of our Conversation.

S. 1. Be very zealous in Gods cause, meek, and yielding in your own. Be content to lie at the Footstool, that the honour of God may have the Throne. I recommend to you the great Example of our Blessed Saviour, he was a Lamb in his own Cause: a Lion in his Fathers. He that could be Scourged and not open his Mouth, could open it in Holy Indignation, and Scourge the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple. He submitted to be called *Beelzebub*, Impostor, and whatever opprobrious Terms a Rancorous Heart could vomit upon him; but in the Cause of his God and Father, he could Lighten and Thunder, and flash Fire in the Face of the most obdurate Conscience. Be ye therefore followers of Christ; *who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered threatned not, but committed himself, and his cause to him that judgeth righteously,* 1 Pet. ii. 23. And again, *Not rendring evil for evil: or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing, knowing that ye are thereunto called that ye should inherit a blessing,* 1 Pet. iii. 9.

S. 2. Be

S. 2. Be strict and severe to your selves, but very charitable towards others. Concerning our brethren, we have this Rule, *Rom. xiv. 13.* *Let us not judge one another any more, but concerning our selves, we have this, 1 Cor. xi. 31.* *If we would judg our selves, we should not be judged.* We are incompetent Judges of others, because we know not upon what Principles our Brother may proceed; we cannot take a just Measure of the Latitude of his Understanding by which he Governs himself: there we ought to be sparing in our Censure; but thou mayst know what is in thy own Heart, and know more by thy self, than either all the World knows by thee, or thou knowest by all the World.

This has brought no little scandal upon Religion, that the Professors of it, have been sharp-sighted Abroad, but blind at Home: could see a Mote in their Brothers Eye, and not the Beam in their own, not duely considering that we who exact a few Pence from our Brother, need the forgiveness of many Talents from our God, *Matth. xviii. 24.*

S. 3. Let us abridge our selves in the use of things which are in their own nature indifferent. He that will go to the utmost length of his Tedder, will easily break it. It's difficult to know where the lawful ends, and the sinful begins.

begins. He that will always go as far as he may go, shall sometimes go further than he ought to go. How much safer to keep an Ell within our limits, than to go an Inch beyond? Better do less than is lawful, than what is sinful. It's an excellent Caution the Apostle prescribes, *Rom. xiv. 16. Let not your good be evil spoken off.* The Glory of Christ, the honour of our Holy Religion, teach us to Retrench in what is merely lawful; and still let us attend that Rule, *Rom. xiv. 21. It's good neither to eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor any thing, whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.* Three things there are included in this Canon. 1. That we lay not a stumbling Block before our Brother, to draw him into sin. 2. That we provoke not his Passion to speak evil of the good ways of God. 3. That we enfeeble not our Brother, nor make him weak in his walking with God, by an unseasonable use of our Christian Liberty.

4. *§ Let your visible Righteousness towards Men, be an inseparable Companion of your invisible righteousness before God.* With what Arguments will you persuade Men that you are Sincere and Upright in his sight, if you cannot convince them that you are so in your Dealings with them? So the Apostle, *Rom. xii. 17. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*

men. I look upon that Man lost, who has lost all regard to the judgment of others; and doubly lost who has cast off all respect to the Judgment of his final Judg.

S. 5. Be Ambitious of a publick Spirit. Express the Image of him, who *is Good, and doth Good.* The Sun does not Monopolize his own Beams to his Disc or Orb, but shines upon the Good and Bad. The Air incloseth not it self, but lends breath in common to All. The Rain is not imprison'd in the Clouds, but sheds fruitfulness on the Field of the Saint and Sinner; the Ocean supplies the upper and the lower World with its Waters. Let us then pray to be made partakers of the Promise given to *Abraham*, Gen. xii 2. *I will bless thee, and make thee a Blessing.*

Those little narrow Souls that make themselves their own Center and Circumference, that dwell within their own Shell, and bless themselves that All is well at home, and never look abroad how it fares with the Oppressed, Fatherless and Widow, the Sick, the Hungry and Naked, that Consider not the Afflictions of *Joseph*, are great Scandals to a Holy Religion; not imitating the blessed *Jesus*, who, *Act. x. 38. Went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him.* Such was the Counsel of the Apostle,

Apostle, *Tit. iii. 8.* *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, be careful to maintain good works: these things are good and profitable unto men. ver. 14.* And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.

§. 6. *Let the Holiness of the inner Man, shine with a convincing Light into all the Actions of the outward Man.* True Holiness will diffuse it self into, and through the external Carriage and Demeanour, that a Man shall be forced to say, God is there in that Soul of a Truth; as the Pride, the Wantonness of filthy ones steams and reeks through the Skin into their Apparel, their Language, their Converses; so should, so will the Humility, the Meekness, Modesty, Chastity, Heavenliness of Holy ones discover it self in their external Behaviour, especially in Food and Raiment; *1 Tim. ii. 9, 10.* *That women adorn themselves with modest apparel, (the Modesty and Chastity of the Heart, will evidence it self in the Modesty and Chastity of Cloathing) with shame-fac'dness and sobriety, not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.* For thus saith St. Peter, *1 Epist. iii. 4, 5.* *Did the holy women of old time who trusted in God, adorn themselves?*

§. 7.

§. 7. *When the favourable Providence of God shall exalt thee, forget not whence thou hast been raised.* Forget not those thou hast left behind thee, forget not thy self, forget not thy God. It has brought much Reproach upon Religion, that many Professors change their Tempers with their outward Circumstances; and when they have got more Sail, they throw away their Ballast; such was *Jeshurun*, Deut. xxxii. 15. *Who when he waxed fat, kick'd, forsook the Lord, lightly esteemed and was un-mindful of the rock of his salvation.*

§. 8. *Lastly, Maintain a high and noble Faith in a low Estate.* This is convincing to Men that there is something real and solid in the Doctrine of the Gospel; when tho' *the Fig-tree blossom not*; tho' *there be not fruit in the Vine*; tho' *the labour of the Olive fail*; and *the Fields yield no increase*, yet *can rejoyce in the Lord, and triumph in the God of their salvation.* Hab. iii. 17, 18.

(2.) I come now to speak of the Promises. These testify what we may expect from God, and upon this Head I will open two Things.

1. I will **briefly** open the Nature of the Promises.

2. I will

2. I will ſhew from thence, what Converſation will adorn the Doctrine of the Goſpel, as 'tis contain'd in the Promiſes.

§. 1. For the brief opening the Nature of the Promiſes. A Promiſe may be deſcribed thus. A Teſtimony which God has given of himſelf through Chriſt, to ſecure our Faith in whatever we may expect from him; as a *Precept* teſtifies what God expects from us, ſo a *Promiſe* teſtifies what we may expect from him. And this is the Glory of the New Covenant; that what we expect from God, enables us to perform what he expects from us. 'Tis in the Strength of the Promiſe that we are enabled to obey the Precept. 'Tis another Excellency of this Covenant, that Divine Mercy has annext the Promiſe to the Precept, and ſo we are not left to a Naked Law: The ſame Apoſtle who complains, *2 Cor. iii. 5. Of an insufficiency to think any thing of himſelf, can yet boaſt that he can do all things, through Chriſt who ſtrengthens him.* Phil. iv. 13. Nothing in himſelf; All things in Chriſt. The Command creates our Duty, but the Promiſe affords Strength for Obedience. Again, according to the extent of the Promiſes, muſt be the extent of our Expectation. What length God has gone in Promiſing, the ſame length may we go in Praying, Believing, Hoping. As the Precepts
are

are the Bounds of our Duty, and all that we can pretend beyond them, is superstitious Folly ; so the Promises are the limits of our Faith, and to expect beyond them is Presumption. Further, we cannot justly complain that we are narrowed and restrained in the wideness of the Promises, for they are adequate to the spiritual Necessities of all his Children in all Ages. The Oyl in the Cruise will run while there is a Vessel to receive it ; our God has to give, while we can find a Heart to pray and receive ; Mercy and Grace will never fail, while there is room to receive it. 'Twas on this Consideration that the Psalmist, weighing the indigency of his Soul, and the exigency of his Condition, was well willing to accept the Promises for his Supply and Treasure. *Psal. cxix. 111. Thy testimonies have I taken for an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoycing of my heart.* So many Promises, so many Testimonies what God will do for his Children, what he will bestow on them, and what they may expect from him. Now *David*, we see, could securely take God's single Security, nor required any to be bound with him for performance. What Security God gave, that he takes, with the Hand, with the Arms of Faith ; as those antient Worthies, *Heb. xi. 13. Who died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and*

were persuaded of them, and embraced them. For whereas there are two things in the Promises, the *Goodness* contained in them, and the *Truth* that confirms them. Those Eminent Saints received the *Truth*, tho' God kept the *Goodness* still in his own Hands. And thus the Psalmist accepted God's Testimonies for good Payment, tho' the Grace, Mercy, Glory wrapt up in them were chiefly of things future, distant and invisible. And these he took for an *heritage*; he blesses himself and rejoices, that the *lines were fallen unto him in pleasant places, and that he had a goodly heritage.* Psal. xvi. 6. Give him but a clear Interest in them, and he is content that the Men of the World, whose Portion lies there, should divide the World amongst them: *For they are the rejoicing of his heart.* They are Light in Darkness; Comfort in Trouble; Advice in Streights; Ease in Pain; Supply in Want; Health in Sickness; Life in Death.

But that I may more fully and distinctly give you the Theory of these exceeding great and precious Promises; there are Two things in them, which shall be more particularly considered: The *fulness* and *faithfulness* of the Promises.

I. First, *The fulness of the Promises.* They contain whatsoever the Soul upon Spiritual Accounts can possibly need: They are commensurate to the Necessities of the Saints in
all

all Cases, the Promise made to *Abraham*. Gen. xvii. 7. *I will establish my Covenant between me and thee, to be a God to thee*; has been frequently exemplified in after-times. 2 Cor. vi. 16. *I will be their God*. And it includes, all that God can promise; all that the Soul can ask or receive. And as it's great folly to sit down with any promise of God, that is short of himself, so 'tis as great a folly to aspire after any thing beyond him. As a little piece of Gold may be beaten out to a great breadth, draw out to an incredible length, yet still it's but the same Gold for Weight and Substance, tho' it will be more for use; so may this comprehensive Promise be drawn out into infinite Particulars, but still all of them are but this one, *I will be thy God*. The Almighty God will be thy Strength; the All-Wise God thy Conduct; the Everliving God thy Life.

But if we desire more explicate Satisfaction, God has given it 1 Tim. iv. 8. *Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come*. Will this World, will the other World, will both Worlds satisfy you? Will Time and Eternity content you? This Word testifies what you may expect from the Promise.

2. *Secondly*, Look now upon the *faithfulness* of God in the Promises, concerning which I recommend these things to your Observation.

1. That God's faithfulness in the Promise, is *God himself*, cloathing himself with the Attribute that our Faith may more easily take hold on him, and more securely rely on him: God is *full* and *faithful*; he is *fulness* and *faithfulness*. And because God seems to value himself, especially upon this Attribute, *Psal. cxxxviii. 2. Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.* And that whatever fails, he will not suffer his faithfulness to fail, *Psal. lxxxix. 33, 34. His covenant he will not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips; for he hath sworn by his holiness that he will not lie unto David.* Hence I say it is that Unbelief is a Sin of such horrid guilt, because it dishonours God in that Point, of which he is so jealous and tender. God can no more lie, than he can die; to doubt or deny his Faithfulness, is to doubt or deny his Being; *1 Joh. v. 10. He, that believeth not God, has made him a liar.* Every Thought, Word, or Act, that represents God otherwise than he is, casts a Reproach upon the Divine Majesty; but to make him a Liar which Unbelief does, represents him as if he were *that Evil one, Joh. viii. 44. who is a liar, and the father of lies*: 'Tis true, none can make God a Liar, any more than they can make Light, Darkness, or Truth, Falshood; but the Unbeliever not crediting the Testimony of God, does by Interpretation and devilish Construction, either

ther judge him so to be, or represent him as such to others. And this Truth, this Faithfulness of God is the Great Buttress of the Promise; *In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised before the world began.* Tit. i. 2.

2. This Faithfulness of God in the Promise, is now drawn up into Writing: God has not only spoken but written; we have it not only from his Mouth, but under his Hand; which tho' it adds nothing to the Divine Truth, yet it contributes much to our weak Faith; for hereby we have a more steady Aim at the Mind and Will of God, than if it had been conveyed only by a Voice from Heaven, or otherwise. As the Law was more durable engraven upon the two Tables, than when delivered from Mount *Sinai*; how much more is our Security that God proceeds with us, and we treat with him by a written Word, than if we had been left to the uncertainty of Oral Tradition. Our blessed Saviour assures us, *Joh. x. 35. The Scriptures cannot be broken.* Tho' nothing more easy than to violate a Precept, yet impossible to repeal it; Unbelief disparages the Promise, but cannot make it void; as a River meets with Rocks and Mountains that would obstruct its Course and Current, and may sometimes run under Ground, yet it will make its

way through all Opposition. *Psal. c. 5. Thy Truth endureth through all Generations.*

3. The Truth of God in the Promise receives yet a further Confirmation from the Oath of God. As when God had nothing greater to give, he gave Himself, his Son, his Spirit, in an everlasting Covenant. So when he had nothing greater to confirm that Covenant by, *he swore by himself, Heb. vi. 13, 17. Wherein God willing more abundantly, to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel confirmed it by an oath.* Happy Man, for whose sake God will vouchsafe to Swear! Miserable Man, who will not believe a swearing God! How wretched is the Nature of Suspicion, Jealousy and Doubt, whom the highest Security direct, and collateral, even from Veracity and Infallibility cannot satisfy.

4. The Truth of the Promises is yet further attested, sealed, ratified by the Death of Christ. Of whose Blood and Cross tho' there are other, and greater Ends, yet this is one to confirm the Promises. *Rom. xv. 8. Jesus Christ a minister of circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the Fathers. And that the promise might be sure to all the seed. Rom. iv. 16.* He has drawn the Covenant into a Testamentary form, and then dies to seal and ratify his own Testament.

ment. *Heb. ix. 17. A testament is of force after men are dead, otherwise it is of no strength while the testator liveth.*

5. You have had many gracious Experiences afforded of the Faithfulness of God in the Promises ; enter them upon Record in your Souls ; an Answer of Prayer ; the Pardon of Sin sealed to the Conscience ; present Help in time of need ; suitable and seasonable Strength against Temptations ; eminent Deliverances in pressing Dangers, are so many Earnests of what he will further do, special Tokens of his Truth in doing them.

In all your Dealings with Men you will buy by a Sample or Pattern ; many of these we have had, and from one we might conclude what he will perform in all other Cases. He shews us in little what he will do in great ; and by what he performs in one Instance gives hope of what he will do in all the rest. *2 Cor. i. 10. He hath delivered us, and doth deliver us, in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.* So that we may with the Prophet set up our *Ebenezer*, *1 Sam. vii. 12.* and give it this Inscription ; *Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.*

6. And now to shut up All ; God summons us in upon our Consciences to give Testimony to his Faithfulness in the Promises. *Isa. xliii. 12. I have declared, and saved, I have shewed when there was no strange God*

among you: therefore ye are my witnesses. God will bring our former Experiences to confront our present Fears. Therefore be well advised, if it be so heinous a Sin to bear False Witness against thy Neighbour, what is it to bear False Witness against thy God?

§. 2. Let us further enquire, How we may Adorn this Branch of the Doctrine of the Gospel?

1. God has seal'd to the Promises with his Truth, his Word, his Oath; let us now mutually seal to them with our Faith. *Joh. iii. 33. He that receiveth his testimony hath set to his seal, that God is true.* It's the highest disparagement to a Person of known Integrity, not to receive his Testimony; and yet Man by departing from his God, has forfeited his Credibility: What *David* once said in a hot fit of Passion; *In his haste, that all men were liars. Psal. cxvi. 11.* All Men, even the Prophets, that encouraged him in the Name of the Lord; that the Apostle in cool blood, and deliberately has asserted, *Rom. iii. 4. Let God be true, and every man a liar.* As none is absolutely Good but one, so none is True perfectly but one, that is God. Now if we can receive the Witness of Man, who is branded upon Record for a Liar; that he goes astray as soon as he is born, speaking lies. *Psal.*

Pfal. lvi. 3. What a Reproach do we cast upon God, who is the Truth. *All whose promises are Tea and Amen in Christ to the glory of God.* 2 Cor. i. 20. And thus the Apostle argues, 1 Joh. v. 9. *If we receive the witness of men, (as we must) the witness of God is greater. And if an oath among men for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.* Heb vi. 16. Let the Promise of God confirm'd by his Oath, put an end to all those Controversies, which our suspicious Hearts have made; let us come off roundly with God, seal to his Promises, and make all the World know to its shame, that we have a God whom we can securely trust.

2. In pursuance of this, let us walk chearfully before the World upon the Credit and Security of the Promises: There was a time when Holy Job could walk in darkness by the light of God. Job xxix. 3. When the Light of the Promises guided and comforted him in the Darkness of Providences; when tho' all was gloomy without, yet all was clear within. It's a great Blemish that Professors give the Face of their Religion; that we hear much and often of their Complaints, seldom of their Praises; always mourning, never rejoicing. This represents Religion as a melancholy cloudy thing, and affrights Strangers from all acquaintance with it; whereas did we live up to the height of what our Religion

Religion would justify us, *We might glory in tribulations.* Rom. v. 3. *Rejoyce evermore.* 1 Theſ. v. 16. *And give thanks to God who always causeth us to rejoyce and triumph in Christ.* 2 Cor. ii. 14. Nor would this be any Triumphant before the Victory, seeing we are already more than conquerours in him that loved us. Rom. viii. 37. For what could all our outward Afflictions, Tribulations, Croſſes, Loſſes, Diſappointments, that we meet withal in the World, do to the extinguishing our Joy, did we, as we might, urge the Promiſes upon our own Hearts, plead them with God, and object them to the Tempter.

1. We might urge them upon our own dejected Souls. *Pſal. xliii. 5. Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul, and why art thou diſquieted within me? hope in God, for I ſhall yet praiſe him.* We are apt to be caſt down and diſquieted, when we are not able to aſſign a good Reaſon of the Dejection and Diſquiet: We have a God to truſt in, a Word from that God, by which to lay hold on him, and why then caſt down? And this Pſalmiſt at other times has been able to relieve himſelf from ſuch a word, *Pſal. cxix. 50. This is my comfort in my affliction, for thy word hath quickned me.*

2. We

2. We might plead the Word of Promise with God, and humbly press his own Truth upon himself, *Psal. cxix. 49. Remember thy word unto thy servant, on which thou hast caused me to hope*: as if he had said, Holy Lord! Thou hast encouraged me to Hope, and I have thy word for the ground of that encouragement; and I am thy Servant to whom this Promise is made, and have therefore Reason to apply the Word to my own Case, and wilt thou forget thy Word, and fail a Servant of thine who hopes upon thy Security? If thou hadst never promised I had never hoped; but since thou hast caused me to Hope, answer my Hope. If I could not say in Sincerity *Lord I serve thee*; I could not say in Faith, *Lord Save me!* If I had forgot thy *Precepts*, I could not plead with thee to remember thy *Promises*. It was therefore excellent Counsel that *Chrysostom* gave. *Ἀκούοντες τῆς Θεοῦ ἐν ταῖς ἐντολαῖς, ἵνα ὅς αὐτοῖς ἀκούσῃ ἐν ταῖς ἐυχαῖς.* Hear thy God in his Precepts, that he may hear thy Prayers: for although the truth of God is the security of our believing, yet sincere Obedience is the ground of our applying to our selves the Promises.

3. We have the word of Promise to answer and refel all the Objections of the Tempter. His great design is to undermine, and blow up that great Fundamental Principle,

ciple, that God is good, and faithful: that he is good and gracious in all his Ways, and Works: faithful and true in all his Words; and great advantage he has got this way, over many holy Ones. *David* was ready to conclude, *Psal.* lxxvii. 8. That God's Mercy was clean gone for ever. That there was a *Total*, and *final* failure of the Divine goodness; and that *his Promise failed for evermore*. Now when the wicked One prevails thus, we are driven from our Anchor, and lie floating, and hulling upon the Waters exposed to the next Storm, to be dashed in pieces against the Rocks. To all these Suggestions, and Injections, we have this one Answer; *1 Cor.* x. 13. *God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able.*

3. Make all that observe you confess that you dare venture, and if the Will of God be so, lay down, and lose all your outward concerns upon the sole ensurance and counter-security of the Promises. God does try us sometimes how much we dare ensure upon his Word, *Matth.* xix. 29. *Every one that has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my names sake, shall receive a hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life: where you easily observe that the Promise is large enough, and the Title unquestionably good;*
the

the only Question is whether we dare venture our All upon this Security. He that lends Money will be satisfied in two Points : First, Whether the Mortgage offered will bear, and answer the sum he lends upon it ? Secondly, Whether the Title of the Estate be good ? What Warranty will be given ? Now in both these we have the clearest satisfaction imaginable. There can be no dispute whether the matter of this Promise will answer whatever we can possibly venture upon it : for a *hundred fold and everlasting life* is far more than we can lay down ; nor can there be any question about the clearness of the Title, since Christ himself undertakes to make it good. If therefore we believe, how freely, how cheerfully shall we lay down our All at his Feet, with them *Hebr. x. 34.* Who not only *patiently but joyfully took the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they have in heaven a better and enduring substance.*

4. Lastly, Live the life of Faith, and despise this poor beggerly life of Sense in Comparison of it. The life of Sense, has its proper Food, its Comforts, Supports, and Supplies : it has its Employments, its Hopes, its Trade and Gains ; but they are all low and mean, all within the road and reach of Sense. The life of Faith has its Food too, its Joys, its Hopes, Business, and Designs ;
but

but these lie out of the road and way of the Flesh. Now if we could through the Grace of God make future invisible things, our All, and conform our Hearts, our Ways, our Course of Life to the great End, we should effectually persuade Men that the Doctrine of the Gospel is a most glorious Doctrine. Our Blessed Saviour tells his Disciples, *Joh. iv. 34.* That he had *meat to eat which they knew not of.* As a Believer has a hidden Life, so he has hidden Meat to support it. He has a hidden Life, *Col. iii. 3.* *Your life is hid with Christ in God:* and he has hidden Food, *Rev. ii. 17.* *To him that overcomes I will give to eat of the hidden Manna.* As he has secret Sorrows which the World knows nothing of, so has he hidden Joys, *Prov. xiv. 10.* *The heart knows its own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.* And hence it is, that the World knows little or nothing of the Bread he Eats, the Life he Lives, the Joy he Joys. *1 John iii. 1.* *Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.* Whatever is within the compass of Sense and Flesh, the Natural Man understands; that he values, prizes, relishes, and blesteth himself in, because he finds a suitableness between them; and his own Frame: but if those who profess themselves Believers have nothing more than this comes to, to produce, in vain do they hope

hope to persuade others of the excellency of their Religion.

Let us therefore give all Diligence to get such a view of the glory of that unseen World, as may dash out of countenance all the glittering glory of this: and make it appear by our Conversation, that we can with a holy Scorn trample upon present visible earthly perishing things, that so living by Faith, and not by Sense, our Hearts may be in Heaven, where our Treasure is; and our Conversation in Heaven, where our Hearts are.

§. 4. Come we now to the fourth General Head, the only thing remaining before we come to the Application, *viz.*

The Reasons why every one that Professeth the Gospel of Christ should conscientiously labour to Adorn the Doctrine of it in All things. The Reasons assigned will be very few, let us Pray that the Good Spirit would make them very strong.

I. *Reason.* It ought to be our great Care to Adorn the Doctrine of the Gospel, because it is the Doctrine of the Great God. It's a Doctrine that was given forth from him that has absolute Power to Command us, *John vii. 16. The Doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me,* and therefore we are to receive it, entertain it, as such, *1 Thess. ii. 13. Te received*

ceived it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God. The Reproach cast upon the Word of God, is cast upon the Author of it, God himself, *Rom. ii. 23, 24. Through breaking of the law, dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.* As the affront offered to the Laws, reflects upon the Law-giver; and God is concerned in Honour to vindicate the dishonour cast upon his own Laws. These things are drawn into a narrow Compass, and we may enlarge upon them with ease in our own Hearts. Let us be well advised whether we be not bound in Conscience to vindicate the Name of God, by Adorning this Doctrine, which has been so horribly blasphemed by defacing it. He that Spits in the Face of Religion Spits in the Face of God. He that tramples upon the Word, tramples under Foot the Son of God.

2. *Reason.* 'Tis the Doctrine of our Saviour, our Redeemer; and these Terms carry strong Obligations in them to Adorn his Doctrine; or having already defiled it, to repair the damage we have done it. The former Reason was drawn from Authority, but this from Interest, and both of them work by Love. Christ is a Saviour, and has preach'd the Doctrine of Salvation. A Redeemer, and has revealed the Doctrine of Redemption.

A Mediator, and has made known how Sinners may come unto God by him. It was St. *Austin's* censure of the *Platonists*, *Patriam viderunt, viam ignorârunt*. They saw their Country, but knew not the way to it : they had at least some rude confused Notions, that Blessedness must needs lie in the enjoyment of a perfect infinite Being ; but how to attain Reconciliation and Communion with him they were at a loss ; what they saw in a *Glass darkly*, the Gospel has revealed plainly, and we see it with open Face, 2 Cor. iii. 18. And what they were totally ignorant of, we behold in a clear sight ; that is, wherein our everlasting Happiness doth consist, and how we may reach that Happiness. And shall we tread under our Feet that blessed Doctrine, the power whereof in our Hearts will certainly save us ; and the Guilt lying upon our Head will eternally Condemn us.

The Apostle's Pleading is clear and strong, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. *Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price that ye may glorifie him in your spirits and bodies, which are his*. It is an acknowledged piece of Justice, that he that purchases lawfully, should enjoy peaceably ; and with what indignation do we exclaim against that Man that keeps out of Possession a lawful Purchaser. Consider this Case, 'tis your own ; if Christ has bought you with an invaluable Price, whose true va-

lue none can perfectly understand, but the Father to whom it was paid : shall we Treat that Gospel which brings us these glad tidings with Contempt and Neglect?

3. *Reason.* To Adorn the Doctrine of our God and Saviour, will be our own greatest Ornament. Holiness was the comely wear of Primitive Christianity : no Artificial Dress did ever so Adorn its Profession and Professors as plain Godliness. The Varnish and Paint of Art will wash off with a little stormy Weather, but *wisdom makes the face to shine*, *Eccles. ix. i.* This is the Counsel of Divine Wisdom, *Prov. i. 9.* *My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother : for it shall be an ornament of grace to thy head, and chains to thy neck.* This was the Tyre wherewith the *holy women of old time* Adorned themselves, *1 Pet. iii. 4.* *Even the Ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price.* Such was the Dress of the Gospel, before the commonness of vain Modes and wanton Fashions took away the Deformity of Pride, and almost forced the Antient Simplicity to retire into Corners.

Did we see an Antient Piece, drawn by the Hand of some of the great Masters of *Greece* or *Italy*, we should admire the Painting, tho perhaps ridicule the Antick Garbs. Surely if some of the Primitive Professors should rise
from

from the Dead; they would neither know us, nor we them. A heavenly Conversation is Antiquated; every one wears the Livery of his Party; the distinguishing *Shibboleth* of his own Sect: but where are they that accommodate themselves in All things to the Doctrine according to Godliness! What an honour to be a Citizen of the New *Jerusalem*? To be an Heir of God, and a joint Heir with Christ his Elder Brother; and let us endeavour to reflect some of the honour back again upon the Gospel which we receive from it.

4. *Reason.* To Adorn the Doctrine of the Gospel will greatly recommend it to those who are at present Strangers to it. We have the prejudices of Men to contend with; their radicared Enmities to subdue and conquer: we dispute, we argue in vain. 'Tis a severe uniform Holiness, suited to the Principles, Precepts, and Promises, that must either wrest their Weapons out of their Hands, or make them freely lay down their Arms at the Foot of a Redeemer, 1 *Pet.* iii. 2. The Apostle supposes a very hard Case: that a *believing wife is unequally yoked to an unbelieving husband*: an uneasy condition! But how may it be remedied? The Apostle answers, *If any obey not the word, they may be won by the conversation of the wives*: but the question is what Conversation will reach that end? He

answers again, *While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.*

Are there any of you who have a Neighbour, a Relation, a Friend that is as your own soul; for whose Conversion you have longed, prayed, mourned, and added Counsel, Entreaties to your Prayers, and Tears; add a holy humble consciencious Conversation, keeping your Consciences void of offence toward God and Men; and despair not of success.

5. *Reason.* There's nothing more Provokes the wrath of God, than to throw Dirt in the Face of the Gospel; and the next Provocation is, not to wipe that off, which others have thrown upon it. Which way God will vindicate his insulted Honour; which way he will Avenge himself upon a careless, or loose, or indifferent Generation of Professors, I cannot foretel: whether he will take the Sword into his provoked Hand; or give a Commission to Fire, Plague, or other Judgment, to avenge the Quarrel of his Gospel; but certain it is, he will do it, *Levit. xxvi. 25, 26. I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenants: and when you are gathered together in your Cities, I will send the pestilence amongst you: and ye shall be delivered into the hands of your enemies, and when I have broken the staff of your bread, &c.*

We have notoriously affronted the Gospel of our God and Saviour, either by unmerciful Persecution, or an unsuitable Conversation: this Gospel has just cause of Quarrel against us. God takes the Quarrel of his despised Truths, Precepts, Promises, Ordinances, into his own Hands, he will avenge it: He has already sent us a Challenge, nay, he has drawn blood on us; but yet his patience waits, and strives with us, and calls to us to take up the Controversie: what shall we do? Either we must fight it out, and carry on a vigorous War against Heaven; or entertain, O that we would entertain, better, wiser Counsels, and *Agree with our Adversary quickly whilst we are in the way with him*, and he in the way with us, lest, I tremble to mention what follows. Let us then Repent, and turn to the Lord with our whole Heart; let us Reform our Persons, Families, our Lives, peradventure the Lord may be, nay certainly the Lord will be reconciled to us, and have Mercy upon us.

§. 5. The Improvement of the Point only remains: and till we have done that, we have done nothing: but here we are usually under some mistake; we think it is only the Preachers work to make Application, when it's the proper Duty of All to apply it. All he can do is to Direct how it may,

how it must be applied by all that hear it.

This Truth must be applied and improved two ways: by way of Humiliation, and Exhortation.

I. *Improvement by way of Humiliation.*

ARE we then thoroughly convinced that it ought to be the cautious care of all that Profess the Gospel, to Adorn the Doctrine of it, in all things? Let us then be humbled! Let us take up a bitter Lamentation over this bleeding, gasping, and if Grace prevent not, this dying Gospel. It has fared amongst us, just as the poor Man, Luke x. 30. *Who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves: they strip him, wound him, and leave him half dead: but who could expect better quarter from bloody Thieves? In this dying and desperate state, there comes by a Priest; he sees him, but his Eyes did not affect his Heart, but passes by. A Levite next, he bestows a careless look upon him, but passes by on the other side. Might not better things have been expected from the Priests and Levites? Well! In the agony, and pangs of Death, comes by a Samaritan; one abhorred both by Priest and Levite; one that they damned for a wretched Schismatick; but yet he had Bowels of Compassion for the expiring*

piring Man : he binds up his Wounds, and takes care for his Cure. The Doctrine, the Gospel of God our Saviour lies here a bleeding, a dying ! 'Tis in vain to inquire who has been the Assassin, who has committed the Massacre ? For all will remove the guilt from themselves, though all be guilty : in the mean time Religion bleeds on, and is ready to give up the Ghost ! Now it's usual when a Person is found fore wounded in the Streets, to ask who wounded him ? At least to describe them by such Characters, that they may be pursued, seized, and brought to Condign Punishment : But have we Courage enough, Conscience enough to ask wounded Religion this question ? How readily would it answer, though with the Accents of a languishing Voice, It was you, all, and every one of you that are guilty ; and our own Consciences will accuse, and convict us that we are the Men !

When our Saviour, *Matth. xxvi. 21, 22.* Had told his Apostles that *one of them should betray him.* They were exceeding sorrowful and began to say one by one, *Lord is it I ? Lord is it I ?* He that knows his own deceitful Heart, and the Corruption that lies dormant there, will find Reason to suspect that a Temptation may awaken it to deny his Lord, nay to betray and sell his Lord and Saviour : *Peter and James and John* suspected themselves as much

as *Judas*, and none of us but have cause to say, Lord was it I? I that denyed thy Truth? I that blemished thy Gospel? And if so, O let us mourn, and mourn bitterly over him whom we have pierced, as one that mourneth for an only Son, *Zech. xii. 10.*

It was a cutting word that would have wounded the Heart of any but an Obdurate *Judas*. *Judas betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss*: Do we pretend to Kiss him, and yet basely betray him? The smiling Face aggravates the Rancour of the false Heart. This was the baseness of *Joab*, that he saluted *Abner* and stabbed him: do we Complement Christ, and Stab him?

The Gospel may say to us in the language of that Prophetick Scheme, *Zech. xiii. 6.* The Question was asked, *What are those wounds in thy hands*? Religion will answer, *Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.* This is that which wounds deeper than the Swords, the Nails the Spear, the Thorns, that wounded Christ: He has been wounded in the House of his Friends! Let not our deceitful Hearts think to evade the charge: by saying, Lord when did I Buffet thee, or Spit upon thee? It was the Soldiers! When did I Crown thee with Thorns, or put a Reed into thy Hands? Or nail thee to the Cross, or pierce thy side with a Spear? It was the *Jews* that Accused thee, *Pilate* that
Con-

Condemn'd thee, the Souldier that Pierced thee. Nay, but it was thou even thou, who pretending to submit to my Scepter, didst make it at pleasure, but a broken Reed. It was thou that didst profess much love with thy Lips, and yet wast false to my Honour and Interest, thou didst betray me ! Thou that didst call me Lord and Master, and yet disobey my Commandments : And if Christ and his Gospel finds no fairer Quarter from Friends, what may he expect when he falls into the Hands of Thieves ?

It was this which cut *David* to the heart, to be so treacherously dealt with by a pretending Friend, *Psal. xli. 9. Mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, that did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me.* May not we take up the same heavy and doleful Complaint on the behalf of Religion. They that have eaten her Bread, and drank her Wine have kicked and spurned at her. Hear the Psalmist, again, mournfully bewailing his Case, *Psal. lv. 12, 13, 14. It was not an enemy that reproached me, for then I could have born it ; neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid my self from him. But it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company. This was the cutting, killing Stroke ! And this aggravates*
the

the Case of Religion in this dismal day. Religion has been wounded, betrayed, reproached by pretended Friends; when yet the Upright like that holy dying Woman, *1 Sam. iv. 22.* know not how to out-live the *departing glory*, but are willing to die with it. It's a matter of the *greatest* Difficulty to persuade us to Repent of our guiltiness in this Thing, and before I can hope to prevail, I must premise a few Particulars.

1. Whatever Reproach the Professors of Religion draw upon their own Persons, will certainly be fastned upon their Profession.

Now tho' this be an unjust Procedure to Reproach a Holy Truth, because he that owns it holds it in Unrighteousness; yet thus it will be in Fact, the Crimes, the Excesses of Men will reflect upon the Doctrine. They that will Reproach Men for their Duties, will much more revile them for their Iniquities; and from thence take a welcome occasion to revile their Principles and Professions.

2. Whatever Reproach falls upon Religion, will reflect upon the Author of it, even our Blessed Saviour himself. And this should sway with all our Consciences, to walk in-offensively, to give no just Occasion to them that seek it, and watch for it, to blaspheme the Name of our God: Hear, how affectionately the Psalmist prays, *Psal. lxxix. 6. Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord, be ashamed for*

for my sake ; let not them that wait on thee be confounded for my sake, O Lord God of Israel. And he had reason to be sensible that some Pious Souls might be justly offended at him, and reproached for him, when by his sin he had caused the Enemies of God to blaspheme, 2 Sam. xii. 14.

But that I may more effectually Prosecute this Use in inviting you to Humiliation for, and Lamentation over those Scandals which our Holy Religion has contracted upon our Account, I will endeavour to lay before you these three things.

1. I will shew what an Excellent Religion we have reproached.

2. I will lay before you the great Zeal of the Primitive Christians to Adorn their Religion in those purest Times.

3. I will further open how unworthily we have defiled it in ours.

§. 1. Let me shew you *what an Excellent Religion that is, which we have thus shamefully Reproached.*

Amongst the many Great and Glorious Excellencies of the Christian Religion as it stands described and recorded in the Scriptures of Truth, this is one.

(1.) It is a *sound Doctrine*, 1 Tim. vi. 3. *wholesome words*, ὑγιαίνοντες λόγοι such as are sound in themselves, and make sound. Tit.

ii. 1. *Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine* : ἡ πρέπει τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ διδασκαλίᾳ .
All is sound, all sincere, nothing rotten.

1. This Doctrine imbibed will make a *sound Head*, not filling it with empty Notions, airy Speculations, much less with rotten Matter, which will breed Impostumes, and break out into Ulcers, but with such due Conceptions of God as will settle our Faith, engage our Fear, provoke our Love, command our Obedience, and in all, secure the Souls everlasting Interest.

2. It will make a *sound Heart* ; the Psalmist prays, *Psal. cxix. 80. Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I may not be ashamed.* As the Truth received into the Head, will keep us sound from *Heterodoxy*, so the same Truth entertained in its Power into the Heart, will secure it from *Hypocrisy*.

3. It will make a *sound Conscience* ; for herein alone is that Doctrine of Peace and Reconciliation with God revealed through Christ, whose Blood sprinkled *on the conscience purges it from dead works to serve the living God.* Heb. ix. 14.

4. It will produce a *sound Conversation* ; we may lay it down for a Rule, that Religion which begins in Hypocrisy, will end in Apostacy. And there's little difference whether we go in a True way with a false Heart, or forsake that way through a false Heart ; a
 sound

found Heart is the great preservative against both.

Now here we have cause to mourn till we have exhausted the Springs of Tears, and can weep no more; Lamenting over the rotten Doctrines of our Days, which have defied and defaced this Holy and Sound Doctrine; the rotten Conversations that have flamed it, and rendred it contemptible. The Truth is, we can neither bear our Remedy nor our Disease; we are sick with our Food, and sick with our Physick. The Scripture gives us True Notions of God, but Men are ignorant, and too proud to be taught, 1 *Tim.* vi. 3. *Proud knowing nothing.* This Doctrine would be a *lamp to our feet*, but we shut our Eyes against it; and a *light to our paths*, but we will not use it, nor admit it to be our Guide in the ways of Holiness.

(2.) Another Excellency of the Gospel is, that it's a *Doctrine according to Godliness*, 1 *Tim.* vi. 3. And a *Doctrine after Godliness*, Tit. i. 1. κατ' εὐσεβειαν. As if the whole System of Divine Truth were squared and modelled by Godliness: It's not only true, that Godliness must be tried and proved by this Doctrine, but that the Doctrine is formed and fashioned by the Rule of Godliness; every Leaf, Line, Proposition, is adapted to the advancement of Godliness. Here's no Indulgence for Sin; no Toleration for Lust,
not

not one loose Principle in the Body of Scripture Divinity ; and if any Doctrine offers it self that breaths not Purity, we may safely reject it as that which is *not after Godliness.*

And let this also renew our Lamentation, that such a Doctrine has been tortured upon the Rack of unsanctified Wits, to abet filthiness and uncleanness : Men have reap'd what God never sow'd, and gather'd what the Holy Spirit never strew'd : when this Grace of the Gospel is turned into lasciviousness ; and Men have abounded in sin, because the Grace of God has abounded towards Sinners.

(3.) It has this Peculiar Excellency, that in every respect it's *Good and Profitable to Men.* It is calculated expressly according to the Image of him that *is good, and doth good.* *Psal. cxix. 68.* Such is this Holy Doctrine ; it's a sanctifying and a saving Doctrine. *Prov. iv. 1, 2.* *Hear ye children, attend to know understanding, for I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.* This Doctrine reveals Eternal Life, and the only way to it ; it discovers what we must know, that we perish not in Ignorance ; what we must believe, that we perish not in Infidelity ; what we must do, that we perish not by Disobedience ; what we must avoid, that we perish not in our Rashness : It reveals the end of Creation, Redemption,

demption, and how to reach the end of our Faith, Hope, Prayers, in the Enjoyment of God blessed for ever to Eternity. But if you would have the Particulars in which 'tis good and profitable laid before you at once, read that place, *2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect thorowly furnisht unto all good works.*

And upon this Account, if our Eyes were Rivers, and our Heads a Fountain of Tears, we could not enough mourn; that Men have *turned God's glory into shame*, *Psal. iv. 2.* The Divine Glory has displayed it self gloriously in the Gospel; the Glory of his Mercy manifested to lost, self-lost Sinners; the Glory of his Justice manifested and satisfied in his Son, the Glory of his Holiness shining out in the Precepts, the Glory of his Truth shining out in the Promises, the Glory of his Wisdom manifested in adjusting all Interests, and answering all the Pretensions of the Holy Law, and yet all these impiously turned into Shame.

§. 2. To shew the Zeal of the Primitive Christians to Adorn their Religion.

In

In those Purest Times, Religion had another Face than now it wears ; it was delivered Pure to them by Christ and his Apostles, and they represented it suitably to the worst of their Enemies, and these things were their Glory.

1. *First*, There was nothing more eminently found amongst them, than *Love without Dissimulation* : The Heathen among whom they dwelt, could not but say, *O how these Christians love one another.* Act. ii. 1. *They were all together with one accord in one house* ; as if one Soul animated so many Bodies. They were of one Heart, one Lip, and one Shoulder, that they might *bear one anothers burdens*, and *so fulfil the law of Christ.* Gal. vi. 2.

2. A second Excellency in them was their *fervent Zeal for the Honour of their Redeemer* ; a Zeal so hot, that it quench'd the Flames, and the heat of the Fires which devoured their Bodies. This they copied out from Christ the Grand Exemplar of Holy Zeal for his Father's Glory. *Joh. ii. 17. The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.* Christ's time for Sleep, Food, Rest, was all eaten up by his Holy Zeal to do his Father's Will, and finish his Work. Such was the Original which they propounded to themselves for Imitation, and they wrote after it with great Exactness ; they minded, pursued more the concerns of their
Lord

Lord than their own; the publick Interest of the Church drowned their own private little Interests; as the Sun shining upon our culinary Fires extinguishes them, so did their Zeal for Christ burn up all those petty Animosities, which when peace and rest from Persecution indulged them, broke out into dividing and consuming Flames.

Thirdly, It was their Glory that they lived in a continual waiting for, and expectation of the coming of their Lord; which glorious Day, tho' they could not hasten, yet their longing, praying Souls hastened unto that Day. 2 Pet. iii. 12. *Looking for, and hastning unto the coming of the day of God.* How did they patiently wait, and yet passionately pray, *come Lord Jesus, come quickly*, Rev. xxii. 20. They longed to see their Lord upon his Throne; to see all the Kingdoms of the World brought into subjection to the King of Saints; and their preparations were answerable to their expectations, making ready for the blessed Appearance of their blessed Saviour.

Fourthly, *Their Discourses, their Lives savoured of Heaven*, their Business, their Conversation was above, whence they looked for their Saviour; their Persecutors, when they stript them of all the accommodations of their Pilgrimage, would say with scorn, *We do but ease you of what you say is your burden, and impediment in running your Race;*

H

and

and others when they dragged them to the Stake and Fire would scold, *We do but send you whither you long and pray to go.*

How wretchedly we have copied out those Excellencies, all the World sees better than they who have most cause to be ashamed. If we had holy *Paul's* Heart, we should shed his Tears ; *Phil. iii. 19. Many walk (of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping) that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, who mind earthly things.* An earthly Conversation, bears the clearest Contradiction to a heavenly Revelation. And now what would dry up the Apostles Tears, or what would wipe off this filth from the face of Religion, but that gracious Temper of his, *ver. 20. Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile bodies, and make them like to his glorious body.* And let us from thence draw this Inference : If we look that Christ should once at last vindicate our Bodies from the Dust, let us be ambitious to vindicate his Gospel from the Dirt : Do we look and hope that he will redeem our vile Bodies from the Grave, let us labour to recover his precious Gospel from its Tomb, and pray that at length it may have a glorious Resurrection.

§. 3. Let us in the last place consider how Unworthily this Glorious Gospel has been defaced in our Generation, and from thence furnish our Souls with Matter for Humiliation and Lamentation.

The Primitive Christians are remarkable for *All Love*; we may be justly reproached for All Hatred; they were united, we divided, and subdivided, and crumbled into Parties, when *they were All one Bread*. Love and Affection is now confined to some discriminating mode of Profession; and the Enquiry is not now, whether a Man bears the Image and Superscription of Christ, but whether he bears ours. The old Heat of Primitive Zeal is turned into a feavourish preternatural Heat against each other. It would be difficult to touch this Point, and not to break out into Satyr; but that we cannot Reprove another, but we must Reproach our selves. We have been so fiercely biting one another, that it's a Miracle of Divine Mercy that we are not devoured by one another. Sheep, whose Character has been Meekness and Mildness, are become Roaring and Ravenous Lions: How little do we express the likeness of Christ who was *meek and lowly in heart*. The Gospel would have taught us another Spirit, Col. iii. 13. *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man*

have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

And we have added to that Scandal, which we have brought upon our Holy Religion, that we have intitled Christ to all our reproachful Disorders; and the Argument runs now to divide, to quarrel for Christ's sake, when 'tis for Christ's sake that we should Unite and be at Peace. And yet farther, have we aggravated our Guilt in a foolish thought to exonerate and justify our selves by burdening and loading others, when the impartial can easily judge that all are wrong, but never determine who is in the Right. Thus are we blindly falling upon one another, when every Man should strike his hand upon his own heart, and cry out, *What have I done?* Wherein have I contributed to that Reproach and Scorn that has been thrown upon our Religion? We are sharp-sighted to espy the slips of our Brethren, but blind to observe our own scandalous Falls. And as the Rain that falls upon the Hills is discharged upon the Valleys, the Valleys again empty themselves into the Rivers, the Rivers throw all into the Sea. Thus are we discharging our selves, charging our Brethren, who with equal Zeal and Passion, and perhaps with equal Justice and Reason, are retorting the same Crimes upon us. In the mean time, we are mutually throwing Dirt in one anothers Faces, tossing of Fire-brands

brands at one anothers Heads, and thereby setting all in a Flame, that may involve us all, our Liberty and Churches in the same common Desolation.

I cannot comfortably, yet know not how to forbear enlarging a while upon this ungrateful Subject.

First, Let us bitterly Lament that any of the Precious Doctrines of the Gospel have been so miserably abused, their Gracious Designs frustrated upon us, and perverted by us.

For Instance: 1. What more endearing Truth than that of the Patience of God waiting upon, and striving with Sinners to lead them to Repentance. *Rom. ii. 4.* And yet what Doctrine more impiously abused? God is long-suffering, and Men will be long sinning; God waits, and they will find Work for his Patience. Thus he gave *Jezabel space to repent and she repented not.* *Rev. ii. 21.* He affords Day after Day to repent in, and they turn them into Days to be repented of. Like zealous Gamesters that have but an Inch of Candle left, and they will play it out; and if the Light had lasted longer, they would have drawn out their Sports longer, and go to Bed in the Dark. Such are all impenitent Sinners, who having a Day of Grace, an Hour of Mercy, a Moment of Life wherein to turn to God, sport away those precious Hours and

Moments not lent them for those Ends ; and if Life were prorogued a thousand Years, they would sin those thousand Years ; if their Days were Eternal, their Provocations would be Eternal. And thus that Goodness of God which should mollify, hardens their Hearts ; and they will be worse, and therefore worse, because God is better. As if it were not enough to be Evil, tho' God be Good ; but they will be therefore Evil because God is Good. But this Treatment of the Divine Patience has been foretold. *2 Pet. iii. 4. There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming ? For since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation : Where is the promise ?* A Promise indeed it is, a most Gracious one to them that wait and prepare for his coming ; but a Threatning, a most dreadful Threatning to them that harden their Hearts by it ; Impenitency turns a Promise into a Threatning. But upon what Presumptions do they thus harden their Hearts ? *Because all things continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation.* O most perverse Gloss upon the Text of Divine Forbearance ! for, *ver. 9. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

2. And

2. And what more comfortable Doctrine than that of the Free Pardon of Sin, and Justification through Faith in the Righteousness of Christ. *Rom. iii. 24. Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.* We cannot mention this without bitter Tears, that Men will therefore freely sin, because God will freely pardon. If his Grace abound, they will abound in Ungraciousness. His Mercies are Great, and they will therefore provide great Sins to employ and exercise his great Mercy. What a poisonous Heart must that be that converts, or rather perverts so sweet a Doctrine into Mortal Poyson?

3. Nor has it fared better with the Doctrine of the Perseverance of Saints, which has not been cried down only by such as deny it, but Reproached by those that own it. The Gospel would teach us to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling; because it's God that works in us to will, and to do of his own good pleasure; Phil. ii. 12.* Not to be slothful because God works, but to work more diligently, because we have the Divine Assistance. The same Gospel would engage us, *2 Pet. i. 5. To make our calling and election sure.* To make it out that we are effectually brought home to God, and from thence to infer our Election, and not to delude our Souls with the Sophistry of Hell. If I be

electd I shall be saved, tho' I wallow in all manner of abominable Filthiness.

Secondly, Let us renew our Lamentations, that the Lives of Professors express no more of the Power of the Truths and Precepts of that Gospel which they do Profess. The Temper of Religion as described in the Scripture is Meekness, Humility, Compassion, Beneficence, Charity, Heavenly-mindedness; but these are so ill Copied out by them, that we may seek for Religion among those that are Religious and not find it. And by this means Christ himself is represented unlovely, undesirable, and the inward Enmity in the Hearts of Men is provoked, exasperated and inflamed in Persecution.

And from hence it is that wicked Men think they have got sufficient Matter to justify all their Revilings, their Blasphemies against our Saviour and his Doctrine, and think they do God Service, while they are endeavouring to root out of the Earth, a Religion which is rendred Odious by the unsuitable Conversations of those that seem to glory in it.

The Offences that are given will not justify those that take them: There is a Woe denounced against the World because of Offences, and there is a Woe denounced against those that give them. *Matth. xviii. 7. Wo be to the world because of offences, for it must needs be that offences*

fences come, but woe unto them by whom the offence cometh. Thus they that take the Offence fall into Hell, and Justice sends him thither that gave it.

II. Improvement by way of Exhortation.

I Must conclude with one word of *Exhortation*. To all you that Profess the Doctrine of our God and Saviour, the *Doctrine which is according to godliness*; and yet have seen it lie gasping, bleeding, and ready to die. O pitty a holy Doctrine that suffers unworthy things, and a Saviour that suffers in it: when you lay in your Blood, the Divine pity that saw you wallowing there hopeles, and helpless, Said unto you, even when you were in your blood, live! Ezek. xvi. 4, 5, 6. And have you no Compassion for a bleeding Gospel, for a bleeding Jesus? 'Twas enough that he once suffered for you, let him not a second time be Crucified, and Murdered by you! When the spirit of grace shall be poured out that is promised, Zech. xii. 10. To make us look upon him that we have pierced; there will be bitter mourning, as that for an only son, for a first born, for the untimely death of a good Josiah in the valley of Megiddo. Let us none of us say, What is all this to us? Let them see to it who were guilty; Let Ju-
das

das look to it who betrayed and sold him : let *Pilate* look to that who condemned him : let *Herod* look to that who buffeted and scourged him : let the bloody Soldier look to that who pierced his Side with his Spear : But as for us we are Innocent, and can wash our Hands in Innocency with *Pilate*, saying we are Innocent of the blood of this Just Person ! O wretched evasions of deceitful Hearts ! We, even we, this Professing Age, this Generation of Professors has Pierced, Crucified the Lord Jesus. As it will be charged upon some at the great and dreadful day ; that the kindness they might have shown, and did not show to his Brethren, was not shown to him ; so will it be charged that the Dishonour, the Scandals, the Reproaches they brought upon his Doctrine, his Truths, his Worship, was thrown upon his Person.

I have heard of an aged Gentlewoman who having an only Son, who it seems had found a Pistol in some secret place of the House, she presents it to his Breast in pleasantry, but the Pistol fires and Shoots him to the Heart, when he had only so much time and strength as to say, *Ah Mother ! You have slain your only Son !* Think with your selves ; what amazement, what confusion, what consternation seized her soul when the Hearts blood of a dutiful, of an only Son spun out into her Face,

Face, and his dying Accents sounded in her Ears, and she found herself Childless in one moment through her own rashness and folly!

Let us set before our Eyes the blessed Gospel of our dear Lord Jesus, wounded, bleeding, dying by our careless Walkings, by our Animosities and Heats boyled up into Hatred! Not only his seamless Coat, but his tender Heart rent in pieces by our Divisions; together with the Triumphs of the Profane, who insult over Religion, and say, Down with it, down with it, even to the ground; and now it's fallen it shall rise up no more. Look seriously upon these things, and then tell me, tell your own Souls; and let Conscience, an awakened, a wounded, a reflecting Conscience tell you, with what Regret, with what self-Abhorrence, you, we, all of us should resent these Indignities offered to the dear, and precious concerns of our God and Saviour.

I am assured, and rejoice in that Assurance that there is a sound part amongst the Professors of the Gospel, which hath not drawn this Condemnation upon their own Heads. There was one *Joseph* amongst the guilty Sanhedrim who had not consented to their unjust Sentence, *Luke xxiii. 51.* There are holy souls that *mourn in secret for all the Abominations that be done in the midst of us, Ezek. ix. 4.* And there may be others whose
Hearts

Hearts God has touch'd with Sorrow for the sins of others, and Repentance for their own: now for the sake of these, and such others, as the Convincing Grace of God shall reach, I will

1. Give some Counsel and Advice.
 2. Offer some Motives to give an edge to that Advice.
-

I. Counsel and Advice.

MY Advice will be reduced to these two Heads.

1. What we must Avoid, if we sincerely design, or ever hope to Recover the Credit of the Doctrine of the Gospel.

2. What we must do, if we really design to contribute any thing to the healing of our wounded Gospel.

§. 1. What we must *Avoid*, if we sincerely design, or ever hope to Recover the Credit of the Doctrine of the Gospel?

(1.) The first Prescription must be this, that we watch against the breakings out of ungovernable Passions. A Passionate Man's Heart is like Gun-powder; it may lie quiet and still at present, but the least spark of a Provocation sets it all in a blaze: or like the Humours in the Body, which are calm and fedate,

sedate, but they only wait an occasion to set them into a Ferment. If once we lay the Reins upon the Necks of our Passion, the inferior part runs away with the superior; that is, the Beast rides the Man, runs away with him, perhaps throws him, and breaks his Neck. In these Paroxysms, Reason and Religion are dethroned, and a base Lust usurps the place.

He that will not keep a severe Hand upon, and over these unruly Passions lies open to the Assaults and Practices of the Devil, *Prov. xxv. 28. He that hath no Rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls:* when the Walls are demolish'd, the strength is gone, and we become an easie Prey to our Enemy, and even tempt the Tempter to invade us. 'Tis Meekness, Humility, Patience, that gives us and keeps us in Possession of our own Souls, *Luke xxi. 19.*

Now consider what mischief this Passion has done to Religion: our Differences were but few till Passion multiplied them; inconsiderable till Passion heightned and greatned them: we have no Controversies but might have been fairly buried in Christ's Grave. He that could compromise the Differences between a justly provoked God, and unjustly provoking Men, might be supposed able to compose those between Brethren: but Pride and Passion have inflamed the Reckonings,
and

and who now is able to quench the Flame?

As others that behold our Passions will suspect all is not right with us, so have we most Reason to suspect our selves; and to question whether ever the Word of God has taken any saving hold of our Hearts, when it cannot govern the intemperance of our Lips, *Jam. i. xxvi. If any man seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that mans religion is vain.* In vain, as to any acceptance it finds with God; and in vain as to any satisfaction it can give the Conscience: and thus the fiery Professor tempts all the world to judge there's no Religion in him; and then to conclude, there is as little in Religion. And this is it which affrights Aliens from the good ways of God; they render Religion so unlovely, so uncomely, so little amiable, that Strangers think it better to be as, and where they are, than to become Christians, some of whom they see fitter for *Bedlam*, than the Church.

If we could learn to discern the Divine Providence, in Mens Provocations; and that as the evil one has a hand in them, the righteous God has an over-ruling hand in them too, it would serve to dash the Ferment of our most boiling Passions, and teach us to say with the Psalmist, *The Lord has bidden him to curse me.* The sense, and fear
of

of God vigorous upon our Hearts, would fortifie them against the sudden eruptions of these Distempers, *Prov. xxiii. 17. My son, be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long, and let not thy heart envy sinners.*

And in a word, It would abate our Passion, and the Pride that feeds it, did we but calmly consider that our strongest Passions, are our greatest Impotencies, and that whilst we indulge this last, we do but make work for Repentance. And what a folly is it to give way to that which must cost us bitter Tears, and Sorrow, before we can heal those Wounds which thereby we have given both our own Consciences, and our Profession.

(2.) Let my next Advice be to avoid all Fraud, Falshood, and Over-reaching in your Covenants, Contracts, and Dealings with your Neighbours. Every Christian, besides that business he has with his God, and his own Soul, has Affairs in this World, on this side Eternal Life. In all these, let your Heart be true to God, your Tongue true to your Heart, and Heart and Tongue both true to your Neighbours, *Eph. iv. 25. Wherefore putting away all lying, speak every man the truth with his neighbour; for we are all members one of another.* We are all Members either in the *First Adam*, or in the *Second*: If in the *First Adam* only, yet why should we

we defraud our own Flesh and Blood? If in the *Second*, why should we wrong them that are with us, *the same spirit*? 1 Cor. vi. 17.

The *Psalmist*, *Psal.* xv. 1. Propounds this great Question, and propounds it to God himself, who alone could answer it, *Lord who shall abide in thy Tabernacle? And who shall dwell in thy holy hill?* Who is that blessed Man, whom thou wilt admit to Communion with thy blessed self in Grace and Glory? And amongst other Characters that describe this person: this is one, verse 2. *He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, that speaketh the truth in his heart.* And verse 4. *He that sweareth to his own heart and changeth not.* Let others go beyond him in Temporals, he will be true to his own Soul, to his God, to his Neighbour, and the Credit of his Religion. 'Tis a great contradiction to Religion to use falshood in our Commerces, and Converses. Our God is the God of Truth, his Word is the Scripture of Truth. In all that Gospel which we Preach, there's not one Proposition but what is truth; and the Apostle, 2 Cor. i. 18, 19. Purgeth himself of all Levity, and Inconstancy in his Promises, by the Truth of that Gospel which he Preached. *As God is true our word toward you was not Yea, and Nay; It was not Yea in Promising, and Nay, in Per-*
forming

forming ; for (saith he) *the son of God Jesus Christ was not Tea and Nay.* Every *Tea* of Christ is *Tea* ; and every *Nay* of Christ is *Nay* : Fidelity therefore is the Image of God, and bears some strokes of his veracity ; as unfaithfulness bears the Image of the Devil, *who is a liar and the father of it : and when he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own,* John viii. 44. And if at any time he speaks a Truth, 'tis not of his own, but either by an over-ruling power extorted from him, or from some wicked end of his own used by him.

(3.) Let us be jealous of, and watchful over our selves in those things that lie near the Flesh : our Corruptions are Tinder, one spark struck into them sets all in a flame : whatever things therefore are most suitable to those Corruptions must be carefully inspected. Let us watch over our selves, watch against the Tempter, and his temptations, and watch as those that watch for their Souls ; and then Pray that God would watch over us and all our watchings, or else we wake, and watch in vain.

The things that lie nearest our Flesh are Food and Raiment ; which are apt to awaken and draw out sleeping Corruption. When we read of some, *Jude 12. That feed themselves without fear :* surely they know not what an Enemy they have that lies in wait to surprize them. Holy Fear would suggest these

I
Thoughts.

Thoughts. How know I but the Tempter has laid a baited Snare for me at my Table? And when he is Adorning the Body; how know I but I may be now preparing a Bait for anothers Soul? Let every Man study his own weak point; there it is the Devil will be sure to Assault thee. It was a dreadful Prophetick Curse which the *Psalmist* utters against some, *Psal. lxxix. 22. Let their table be made a snare; and let that which should be for their good, be to their hurt.* How sad is it to find Death, in the Cup or Dish, where he seeks his Life? And yet how many *Eat and drink their own damnation*, perhaps at Christ's Table, and at their own! The Wise Man, or rather the Wise God has given us this Counsel, *Prov. xxiii. 2. When thou sittest to eat with a Ruler, consider diligently what is set before thee; and put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.* And these Thoughts would mortifie the cravings of the Flesh.

1. That after all our studious Catering, and Carving for the Flesh, yet we must die, and are now dying; whilst we are Eating and Drinking; perhaps whilst Sinning, we are still dying: the means of Life will not always prove effectual to preserve Life. They that fed upon Angels Food yet dyed, *John vi. 49. Meat for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God will destroy both it and them,* 1 Cor. vi. 13.

2. It

2. It would greatly abate the Luxury of the Table, to consider that the Rich Glutton, who fared sumptuously every day, *Luke xvi. 19.* was Dead, Buried, and in Hell, where he could not by all his eloquent begging prevail for one drop of Water to cool his Tongue, scorched with those Flames.

3. And it might moderate our craving wandering Appetite, to consider that Nature is content with little, and Grace with less : and whatever is beyond these comes of evil, and leads to evil.

4. And that if we cannot deny our selves in the lesser Instances, how should we deny our selves in those more difficult Trials which Providence may possibly call us to? How shall we be able to want Necessaries, when we cannot deny these Extravagancies?

5. And what a Reproach is it to a Professor, to feel this raging Hunger for *the Meat that perisheth*, when there is such a languishing affection for that *which endureth to eternal Life*. What a shame that we bring sharper Stomachs to our own Tables, than to the Lord's.

§. 2. I have given you the Advice of God, what you must *Avoid* if you would not *Defile*. It remains now that I lay down those *Directions* which you must *observe*, *If you will Adorn the Doctrine of our God and Saviour in All things.*

I 2.

(1.) And

(1.) And first severely Govern your selves, and the whole Tenor of your Conversations, by that *Royal Law*, Matth. vii. 12. *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.* A Law which Christ has transcribed out of the Code of Nature into his own. A Law which once grew upon the stock of Morality, but he has transplanted and inoculated into the Gospel. Called therefore by the Apostle St. James ii. 8. *Νόμος βασιλικός.* *If ye fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self, ye do well.* A Law that carries the fairest Stamp and Signature both of the Divine Nature and Authority. A Law that shines with its own Light into the Soul of Man. No Man would Defraud, Oppress, Persecute another, if he would give his Conscience leave to put this Question to him, Would I be thus treated, thus dealt with my self? A due Attendance to this Rule, would not only teach us to *do Justice*, but to *shew Mercy* to Others, upon this single consideration, I expect Justice, and may need Mercy and Pity from others: for certainly I am obliged to give what I expect; and to shew what I my self may need. And nothing would more reclaim Men from their Unchristian, their Antichristian Barbarities, than to put our selves into the same Condition, and Case;

to suppose our selves chained in the same Prison, labouring under the same pressures, with others of our Brethren.

1. Whatever Mercy, Pity, Charity we may possibly need in our Extremity, let us learn to shew it to others in theirs. If we shut up our Bowels of Compassion, what may we expect but that God will shut up his; and that will restrain the Bowels of Compassion of all the World to us: as the first Cause either draws nigh to us, or recedes from; so will the second, either assist or forsake us. This Reason the Apostle offers, *Heb. xiii. 3.* why we should *Remember those that are in bonds*, and sympathize with them, as if we were *bound with them*; and *them that suffer affliction*, as being your selves also in the body. Suppose we are not actually bound, yet *we are in the body*, and may be so. We are not Sick as others are, yet *we are in the body*, and may be so; and shall then need those Charitable Visits, that Relief, which we now forget or neglect to Administer. Or perhaps we now abound, dwell at ease, yet still *we are in the body*, and may soon in that very Kind need Compassion.

And this may seasonably lead us into the Admiration of the Pity, Compassion, and Bounty of our gracious God; who being out of the reach of our Necessities, yet can exercise Bowels of tender Mercy

to us poor sinning and suffering Worms; and into the Admiration of the pities of Christ, who now upon the Throne, and out of the way of those Afflictions and Temptations wherewith we are encompassed, yet has not left the Humane Nature behind him, but taken it with him into Heaven, that he might therein compassionate his distressed Members, whom *he is not ashamed to call his brethren*, Phil ii. 11.

2. This ought to teach us to do that Justice to others which we expect others should do to us: for *with what judgment we judg, we shall be judged*, Matth. vii. 2. This one thing would marvellously Adorn the Gospel, when we can Convince all the World that our Religion has made us better Men, when it made us Christians, and that we brought along with us *Morality*, when we espoused and came over to *Christianity*.

(2.) Secondly, Maintain a heavenly Mind, and Conversation. Let all see that though your Root be in Heaven, yet you bring forth Fruit here on Earth. It has reflected highly upon our Profession, that we believe well, but live ill: we have got a Systeme of heavenly Truths in our Mouths, but we disparage them with Earthly Lives. A heavenly Mind, a heavenly Frame of Heart, would support a heavenly Conversation; now because this is that great thing that must re-

cover

cover the Credit, and Honour of the Gospel, I will in few words shew you what it is.

1. A heavenly Mind has unmoveably fixt and pitcht upon Heaven for its great and commanding end; this is his Fathers House whither he is always Travelling: 'tis the Port for which he is Bound. And because there may be a mistake in the Notion of Heaven, as that it may be only a place of Ease, a state of Rest from the Troubles of this Life, he is satisfied that the enjoyment of God in that Place and State makes the real Heaven, *Psal. lxxiii. 25. Whom have I in Heaven but thee?*

2. The heavenly Mind, and Heart, is always vigorously pursuing that great Design; and because there are many impertinent avocations that would seduce or steal his Heart from his end; he shakes them off with indignation, as those that would divert him in that Holy pursuit; nor does he so much consider how much of his Race he has run, as he ties up himself to run the rest, *Phil. iii.*

14. *Forgetting the things that are behind, and looking unto those that are before, we press towards the mark for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus.*

3. The heavenly Mind, endeavours especially to maintain a heavenly Temper and frame of Heart; which is the life of all heavenly pursuits. The Habits of Grace must

be reduced into Act and Exercise ; and Grace must be laid out to its highest and noblest end, as the best Instrument must be in Tune before the skilful Hand can make Melody upon it ; so must the Heart be kept in Frame suitable to the services which are proper to it.

4. A heavenly Mind must Conform it self to, and Exercise it self in those employments here below, which are the proper Work of Heaven : always recovering it self when it deviates from its main end, with this Question: My soul! *How do the Angels, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect spend their blessed Eternity above?* They are surely Praising, Blessing, Admiring, Adoring, Loving, and Serving their God, their Redeemer, their Sanctifier, and Comforter ; and why do not we Conform our selves to their Pattern ? The great Law of Heaven governs them, and every Thought and Motion of their Wills: why do we not then more fervently Pray, that we may do the *Will of God on Earth as 'tis done in Heaven?* With the same chearfulness and perseverance ? And though we come short of their Perfect Love, Praise, and Service, yet let us be Practising, and tuning our Hearts. and Harps, for those *Hallelujahs*. The Work of Eternity must be begun in time upon us, and done in time by us ; nor is there a wilder Fancy that can delude the
vain

vain Heart of Man, than to imagine we shall leap at once from a Life of murmuring and repining here, to a State of Praising and Glorifying God for ever.

We cannot doubt but such a Life as this would put a New Face upon the Christian Religion, and convince the most obstinate, that we suppose Everlasting Life and Glory, to be the most Real, Certain, and Excellent Thing, when we can live at the Holy, Heavenly, and Chearful Rate, which supposes it to be all these; That we do firmly believe, that whatever are the inconveniencies of our Pilgrimage, a Portion in Heaven will answer them, and repay us. And that therefore we look upon our selves as dwelling in Tents and Tabernacles, without any fixed City here below, as those Holy Patriarchs once did; *Heb. xi. 9.* and dare not drive our Stakes too deep into the Earth, because we look long, and pray every Day to be called away home to our own Countrey.

(3.) Let us study and follow after the things that make for Peace; our God is the God of Peace; our Redeemer, the Prince of Peace; the Holy Ghost, is the Spirit of Peace; the Gospel is a Doctrine of Peace, which reveal'd *peace on earth, and good will towards men.* *Luk. ii. 14.* But to our shame, and the shame of our Profession, we have represented it as a Civil War. We say we own

one God, one Lord Jesus Christ, one holy Spirit, and one hope of salvation; why then do we not keep the unity of spirit in the bond of peace, Ephes. iv. 3, 4, 5. Peace is that which every one will commend, but very few will entertain. If we regard the Orations of Men, one would think it the most precious and desirable thing in the World; but if we observe their Divisions, one would conclude it the most Pernicious and Dangerous. All Differences in Opinion do not infer a Difference in Religion, nor all Local Separation a Schism; but when the smallest Differences are managed by proud and froward Spirits, and they influenced by secular Interests, it's a wonder to see what Flames a little Spark kindles. The sum is this; Perhaps we cannot syncrize in the Minutes of Religion, nor express the finer Stroaks of Uniformity in our Sentiments; yet let us Religiously keep up a Spirit of Love to Peace and Truth. Christ has declared Love to be the Livery of his Disciples, by which they are known to be His, *Joh. xiii. 35. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* As it was the Livery he enjoynd them whilst living, so was it his Legacy bequeath'd to them when dying, *John xiv. 27. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.*

(4.) Let

(4.) Let us all most fervently cry unto God that his Holy Spirit may be poured out upon the Professors of Religion, and that it may accompany the Preaching of the Gospel; then will the Doctrine of God our Saviour shine gloriously when the Spirit shall be its Light; then will it Conquer and Triumph, when the Spirit shall second it with his Might. This is that which subdues the Pride, the Passions, the unruly Lusts of Men, and brings down whatever exalts it self against the Truth in subjection to God. This influence attending the Word shall make Persecutors become Preachers; Scoffers of Religion become Admirers of what they have Scorned, and Blasphemers to justify that Name which they have Reproached; this will give the Doctrine of the Gospel a Throne in their Hearts who have trampled it under their sordid Feet. And this St. Paul well understood when he so earnestly entreats the Churches Prayers, *2 Thess. iii. 1. Brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified.* When the Light shall scatter the Darkness that like a thick Cloud sits upon Mens Minds; when the Power of it shall bear down that Opposition that rages in their Hearts; when it shall break through all Impediments and make its way to the Conscience, then will the Doctrine of our God and Saviour Adorn it self, and not need

need any other Ornaments we can put upon it.

I profess my self unwilling to dismiss this Argument, till it has had its proper Effects upon the Hearts and Consciences of the Readers; but I must draw to a Conclusion, which I will do with a few Considerations, humbly praying that the Great Lord and Master of the Assemblies would drive every Nail to the Head, and so fasten it in the Heart, that the Power and Policy of the Devil may never draw it out.

1. *Consideration.* What great Reason have we to Adorn the Doctrine of our God and Saviour, when we have been the Cause, or given the Occasion to its Dishonour. Justice demands that we should heal it, because we have wounded it. I persuade my self that there are many under the Rebukes of their own Hearts, that the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ has been evil spoken of through their irregular Conversations; I hope too that many have repented, and that God has pardon'd the Iniquity of their Sin; but yet God will bear a Testimony against their careless and common Behaviour, tho' he has pardon'd the Sin. Thus he dealt with *David*, 2 Sam. xii. 13, 14. *The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die. Nevertheless because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the*

the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; the Child that is born unto thee shall die. In what way the Jealous God will bear Witness against the present Generation of Professors, for the Scandals they have given, I presume not to determine; most certain it is, he will not put up the Affront without Repentance and Reformation. The safest Course for every one of us is, to confess our Sins, to take Shame to our selves, to give Glory to God, and not to blush at our Repentance, when the only thing should make us blush, is our Sins.

2. *Consideration.* Adorning the Gospel by a suitable Conversation, will prove the best expedient to secure its Presence with us. If we think it not worth the Adorning, we may question, whether God will think it worth his Continuing and Protecting. 'Twas disingenuous in *Absalom*, to spurn his poor Sister out of doors, when he had defiled her; but the Justice of God will be manifest, if he removes our Gospel which we have basely prostituted. 'Tis his own threatning to the Church of *Ephesus*, Rev. ii. 5. *Remember from whence thou art fallen and repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candlestick out of its place, except thou repent.* A Father takes away the Childrens Bread, when they crumble it in scorn upon the Ground; and if he indulges them Candle to play,
yet

yet will not allow them it to fight and quarrel.

Let us consult the Histories of Antient Times, they will inform us, that Religion was never rooted out by Persecution, till it had been made cheap by the Profanation of Professors. The Primitive Christians proved this Truth, that Religion flourish'd fairer, and grew faster when it was watered with the Blood of the Martyrs. Prosperity, and that Loosness which commonly attends it, was the Poyson poured out into the Church. The frequent mowing down of Christ's Field, makes it come up the thicker, and greener. *Plures effimur quoties metimur*, was *Tertullian's* Observation. Debauching Prosperity has been the greatest Enemy that ever Religion had in the World; *Isa. v. 4.* when God looked, as after all his Cost and Pains he might well look, that his Vineyard should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes: Go to now (saith he) I'll tell you what I will do to my vineyard, I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up, and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down, and I will lay it waste.

The Politicks of Earth are vastly different from those of Heaven, both in the Securing and the Adorning Religion. The Methods of humane Wisdom to secure Religion, proceed thus. They hedge it about with strict Laws and severe Penalties, which sometimes are

as cruel as the Crimes they would restrain are Enormous; and whilst by these Artifices they would entail Religion upon Posterity, corruption of Doctrine, defiling of Worship, and looseness of Manners provokes God to cut off the Entail. And thus when we have lost the Power of Religion upon our Hearts, and the Purity of it in our Lives, our Care is to supply the Defect, by trimming and tricking it up with gaudy ceremonial Ornaments. How much more beautiful were our first Parents in their Original Nakedness, than when the Sense of Sin and Shame taught them to patch together a few Fig-leaves to cover it; but Religion is its own Strength, its own Beauty. 'Tis its own Ornament and Muniment; nothing adorns, nothing secures Religion, but Religion. Let us therefore shew an Exemplary Conversation, and this will Beautify, this will Fortify it better than all our politick Contrivances, and fruitful Inventions.

It was a Glorious Promise which God gave to the Gospel-Church, under the Notion of *Jerusalem*; *Zech. ii. 4, 5. Jerusalem shall be inhabited as Towns without walls and bulwarks. For I, saith the Lord, will be a wall of fire round about her, and will be the glory in the midst of her.* Holiness engages God's special Presence, and that Presence is our Protection. Secure God's Glory in the Center, and we shall

shall have a Wall of Fire in the Circumference. A parallel Promise we have, *Isa. iv. 5. Upon all the Glory, there shall be a Defence.* If therefore we are careless of *that Glory*, let us make what Walls we can, our Walls of Water and of Wood will deceive us ; nothing but such a Holiness as will engage the Divine Presence and Protection can secure us, and the Gospel of God our Saviour unto us.

3. *Consideration.* Nothing but a holy exemplary Conversation can possibly propagate the Gospel abroad ; our Lives speak louder than our Words ; and we may with more ease live Men over, than dispute them over to Christ. Let us be never so Zealous in our Arguings, they will readily retort it upon us ; Why do you persuade to go to Zion, when you your selves are running to *Babylon* ? In vain did we plead with others to Turn, and look towards Heaven, if we are treading the broad way that leads towards Hell. Do we then, indeed, wish well to the Kingdom of Christ ? Should we rejoyce to see the heathen given him for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possessions ? First, remove the stumbling Blocks we have laid in the way of their Conversion, then win them over by an Heavenly, Holy, Sober, Righteous Conversation ;
 speak

ſpeak ſo that Men may ſee that what you ſpeak you believe to be Truth.

There were more brought in and converted in the firſt Twenty Years of the Reformation, than in the laſt Century; and of our few Modern *Converts* it's to be fear'd ſome of them need *Conversion*.

This was the Glory of the early Days of Chriſtianity, *Act. 2. 46.* *They continued daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from houſe to houſe, did eat their meat with gladneſs and ſingleneſs of heart, praizing God, — And the Lord added daily to the Church ſuch as ſhould be ſaved.* And the ſame Succeſs the Goſpel had upon the ſame reaſon, *Act. ix. 31.* *Then had the Churches reſt, and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and the comforts of the Holy Ghoſt were multiplied.*

4. *Conſideration.* The Adorning of the Goſpel by a holy practical Converſation, would contribute much to the healing of our preſent deplorable Diviſions, our ſcandalous Separations, and that Spirit of frowardneſs and perverſeneſs which has poſſeſs'd this preſent Generation.

The Differences amongſt us are not ſo great as are imagined, nor yet ſo ſmall as not to be lamented; Wiſdom, Humility, and a temper of Moderation, might have ma-

K

naged

naged as great Matters as these came to, without any notable Scandal; but a Spirit of Pride, Hatred, uncharitable Censoriousness, has inflamed these little things to a prodigious height: Now the process was thus.

Some Professors had given Offence by their remiss, or perhaps some irregular Walking, there began the Offence; first at the Person, then at the Profession. The Disgust at one grew up to a Disgust against all of the same Denomination; from an Offence at the Persons, it grew up into a Distaste of their Worship, and Administrations, and when this dividing Zeal had usurpt the Title of Divine Fervour, then Heaven and Earth, Church and State, must be involved in unquenchable Flames. This was therefore the generous Spirit of the Apostle, 2 Cor. xi. 12. *What I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion, that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.*

But I must shut up this Discourse, which a sincere desire to restore our Holy Religion to its due Honour and Repute, has made to grow under my hands, to a bulk far greater than at first designed.

Give me leave to reassume my Exhortation; I beseech you Brethren by the Mercies of God, and the Bowels of our Lord and Saviour, that you would consider and pity the sad Case of his blessed Gospel, which has
been

been wounded either by our hands, or through our sides; and make it your great Business to *Adorn it in All things.* I deny not but though you should walk like Angels, there are a Generation of Men would reproach you as Devils; but yet there are many Curable Souls, whose Reconciliation to the Ways of God, wants nothing, waits for nothing so much, as that you should shew them the way to Heaven by your Heavenly Example: And that our Endeavours may be successful, let us all join with the Prophet in his Pious Prayer, *Hab. iii. 2. O Lord I have heard thy speech and was afraid: O Lord revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.* Amen.

F I N I S.